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Moscow to curb arms sales to Iran
WASHINGTON (AP) — Strengthening a summit agreement, the Clinton administration has persuaded Russia to halt its delivery of air-to-ground missiles to Iran and to wind up ongoing weapons contracts quickly. The assurances were given last month in Moscow at a meeting of delegations headed by Vice President Al Gore and Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin but only now disclosed by U.S. officials. Russia's decision to stop providing missiles to Iran was a pleasant surprise for the U.S. side, a senior official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. It complies with Secretary of State Warren Christopher's "dual containment" policy — to try to block weapons sales to Iran and Iraq. Russia was engaged in a lucrative weapons arrangement with Iran before President Boris Yeltsin agreed in a summit here last September with President Clinton to forego any new arms contracts with Iran. That still left Russia with ongoing contracts, and it has taken nine months of discussions to whittle away at the situation. The incentive for Moscow was U.S. support for access to more advanced Western technology.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تيمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية. الراي.

U.S. protests France-Iran oil deal
WASHINGTON (R) — The United States said on Friday it was disappointed over an agreement by a French oil group to develop Iranian oil fields, and called on the Paris government not to extend official credits to Tehran. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said the U.S. government had protested to France over the deal signed on Thursday by Total with the National Iranian Oil Company to develop two fields in the Gulf (see page 12). "We are certainly disappointed," Mr. Burns told a news briefing. "Deals of the Total type send the wrong signal to the Iranian leadership at the wrong time. We would like to call upon the French government ... not to extend official credits or other financial benefits to Iran." We don't think it's in France's interest to idly stand by for the sake of short-term profit. Mr. Burns added that the United States had a "very deep disagreement" with France on the issue.

Yemeni president ends visit, pays tribute to Jordan's stands, support

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter
AMMAN — Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh on Friday ended what was seen as a highly successful visit that helped consolidate and expand bilateral relations between Yemen and Jordan and boost efforts to restore Arab solidarity.
President Saleh, who was paying his first visit to Jordan after crushing southern Yemeni socialists who challenged the unity of Yemen last year and a successful visit to Saudi Arabia last month to heal a rift between Riyadh and Sanaa, left for Egypt to continue an Arab tour that he began in Qatar on Tuesday.
In a cable he sent to His Majesty King Hussein after his departure, President Saleh thanked the King for the "warm feelings and hospitality" accorded to him and the high-level delegation accompanying him, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.
In an implicit reference to the role Jordan played in maintaining the unity of Yemen, President Saleh said: "The people of Yemen will never forget your noble pan-Arab positions and your support for Yemeni unity during the most difficult and delicate time."
Arab solidarity and unity were the centrepiece of attention at a press conference President Saleh and King Hussein held Thursday evening after a round of talks.
The King said Jordan was committed to seeking unity, integration and cooperation among Arabs and expressed confidence that the unity of Yemen would be preserved.
President Saleh said he was not mediating between Jordan and Saudi Arabia and that there was no need for any mediation because contacts were continuing between Amman and Riyadh.
He said King Fahd of Saudi Arabia initiated a discussion on Jordan during a meeting of the two leaders had in Riyadh last month and expressed his desire to improve ties with Jordan. Mr. Saleh said he briefed King Hussein on the meeting with the Saudi leader.
The Yemeni leader said direct dialogue between the parties concerned was the best means to overcome what he described as artificial barriers.
At the press conference, the King announced that Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti would visit Saudi Arabia today (Saturday) (see separate story).
The King held a round of closed-door talks with President Saleh shortly after the Yemeni leader's arrival here from Syria. They were later joined by senior leaders from both sides.
Reports said the King reaffirmed his commitment to supporting all agreements reached between Yemen and Jordan, particularly those agreed upon during a meeting last month of the joint higher committee chaired by the prime ministers of the two countries. He also underlined the need to quickly implement what has been agreed upon.
Petra said King Hussein and President Saleh reviewed current Arab affairs and recent developments and underlined the need to restore Arab solidarity on a firm basis and concept.
The talks were attended on the Jordanian side by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, His Royal Highness Prince Tal Ben Mohammed, Lower House Speaker Sa'd Hayel Al Srou, the two deputy prime ministers, the foreign minister and the ministers of supply, labour and state and the Jordanian ambassador to Yemen, Fayez Rabihi.
The Yemeni side included Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Ibrani, Information Minister Mohammad Basandwa, presidential advisor Mohsen Sallami, Abdul Wahab Mahmoud, deputy speaker of



His Majesty King Hussein on Friday sees off Yemeni leader's departure from Amman after Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh upon the a two-day visit (photo by Yousef Allan)

Kabariti visits S. Arabia today in bid to better ties

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter
AMMAN — Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti heads for Saudi Arabia today in first official visit by a Jordanian minister to Saudi Arabia after Amman-Riyadh relations were strained in the wake of the 1990-91 Gulf crisis.
His Majesty King Hussein, in a joint press conference with visiting Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh on Thursday, confirmed the visit, which comes in response to an official invitation by the Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud Al Faisal.
"We hope the results of this trip will be positive and good," the King said. "We are confident that it will be so."
"God willing, it will be another step to build relations on a solid and lasting basis, this is what we hope for what we work for," the King added.
Reports from Saudi Arabia said Prince Faisal had sent an official invitation to Mr. Kabariti as part of what was described as a new policy by the Saudi leadership to heal the rifts caused by the Gulf crisis.
President Saleh of Yemen visited Saudi Arabia last month and Sudan's foreign minister, Ali Osman Mohammad Taha, was in Riyadh this month. Jordan, Yemen and Sudan were among the Arab countries that Saudi Arabia perceived as supporting Iraq following its invasion of Kuwait.
The French news agency, Agence France Presse, quoted Hani Khalifeh, the Jordanian ambassador in Saudi Arabia, as saying that Mr. Kabariti's talks with Prince Faisal would focus on bilateral relations.
Jordanian officials said they hoped the talks would produce an agreement for a summit meeting between King Hussein and Saudi Arabia's King Fahd. The two monarchs met last in Cairo at an Arab summit held immediately after the Aug. 2, 1990, invasion of Kuwait.
One of the immediate tangible results of Mr. Kabariti's talks in Riyadh could be

Jordan voices deep concern over Bosnia

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein on Friday voiced concern over the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina to French President Jacques Chirac in the wake of reports that Serbs were attacking another U.N.-declared "safe area" there after seizing the town of Srebrenica and displacing and mistreating tens of thousands of Bosnian Muslims.
The Jordan News Agency, Petra, said the King and President Chirac exchanged views on the situation in Bosnia during a telephone call Friday and agreed to "continue coordination and consultation at various levels to alleviate the suffering of the Bosnian people and ensure the right of the Bosnians to freedom, sovereignty and security."
The two leaders also exchanged views on regional and international issues of common interest.
Earlier, an official spokesman, quoted by Petra, denounced the Serb assault on Bosnian Muslims (see page 12), and reaffirmed Jordan's solidarity with them.
The spokesman voiced deep concern over the situation in Bosnia and said Jordan would extend humanitarian aid to the Bosnian Muslims in line with directives issued by the King.
The spokesman said the government will pursue consultation with Islamic and friendly countries to ensure the implementation of international resolutions which call for the withdrawal of Serb forces and ensuring the unity of Bosnia-Herzegovina.
The spokesman said the government had been following up with deep concern on the suffering of the Muslim people in Bosnia-Herzegovina as "a result of the brutal Serbian attacks on the innocent old people, women and children, particularly the recent attack on the Srebrenica-area, which had been declared a safe haven in accordance with United Nations resolutions."
The spokesman said Serb forces are threatening to attack the rest of the safe areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina and uprooting the Muslim people from their country.
The government called on the international community and the Arab and Islamic nations to stand by the Muslim people in former Yugoslavia and to make every effort to put an end to their suffering and enable those who fled their homes to go back.
The Jordanian government has requested its permanent representative to the United Nations to follow up this subject at the highest U.N. levels to ensure the protection of helpless civilians, deter Serbian forces and help maintain the unity of their soil, the spokesman said.

Australia to play active role in economic summit

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter
AMMAN — Australia's role in the multilateral phase of the Middle East peace process and participation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economic summit were the key themes for discussions between Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans and Jordanian leaders here Friday.
Mr. Evans, who arrived here Thursday and left to Syria and Lebanon on Friday, was received by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker in separate meetings. He also held talks with Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti.
The Jordan News Agency, Petra, said the Crown Prince and Mr. Evans reviewed bilateral relations and means to improve them.
The Crown Prince also discussed the MENA summit and means to ensuring the success of the conference, which is expected to be attended by government leaders and a large number of international businessmen and economists.
Petra quoted Mr. Evans as reaffirming that his country would participate actively in the summit and praising Jordan's achievements and the Kingdom's key role in the Middle East and efforts to arrive at a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region.
Earlier, Mr. Evans told reporters after his meeting with Sharif Zeid that Australia was "well aware of the significance of the Amman summit not only for Jordan but for the wider region."
"I have been asked by both the foreign minister and the prime minister for high-level Australian representation," he said. "We certainly will be presented here, and I will take back that recommendation."
Elections in Australia might make it difficult for high-level "movement out of the country," but "again, we are conscious of how important (the summit) is for this country, for this region as a whole," he said.
"We want to be part of the economic future of this region and we certainly will be represented at the highest level we can," said Mr. Evans.
Petra said Sharif Zeid and Mr. Evans reviewed bilateral relations and other issues of common concern.
The prime minister highlighted the importance of water to the region and the need to find new water sources to meet the needs of agriculture (Continued on page 7).

Boy shot in Nablus

TEL AVIV (AP) — A Palestinian was shot and at least three arrested Friday in stone-throwing incidents on the West Bank. A 17-year-old was shot in the thigh by border police in Nablus, one of four West Bank towns that Israeli troops are expected to withdraw from in the fall. An army spokesman said the youth was wounded when police tried to disperse a crowd throwing stones at patrolling troops. In Hebron, Palestinians threw stones at border police, who disbursed the crowd and took three people in for questioning, Israel Radio reported.

6 beheaded in S. Arabia for murder

RIYADH (AFP) — Six Saudis were beheaded Friday in the Riyadh area for murder and theft, the interior ministry said. Three of them had killed a fruit-seller, and kidnapped and robbed a petrol station worker. The other three had murdered a Saudi. Some 114 people have been executed in Saudi Arabia since the start of the year compared with 58 in 1994, according to a toll based on official figures.

Three of 10 New Yorkers are poor

NEW YORK (AFP) — Three in 10 residents of New York lived below the poverty line in 1993, a charity organisation said Friday. An analysis published by the Community Service Society of New York showed 1.9 million New Yorkers, or 27 per cent of the population, earned less than \$7,363 for the year. "We see this as the result of the contraction of the New York economy," said David Jones, chairman of the organisation, which said this figure was the highest ever in its 16-year history. New York's Hispanic population, which represents 24 per cent of the city, was most affected, accounting for 46 per cent of those living below the poverty line. "We've been caught up in a regional recession and it has had the worst impact on unskilled workers," said Mr. Jones.



Israeli soldiers watch Palestinians performing prayers at Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem on Friday (AFP photo)

Israel, PLO launch marathon talks to meet July 25 deadline

ZICHRON YAACOV, Israel (Agencies) — Israeli and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) on Friday held the first session of intensive talks aimed at reaching an accord on expanding Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank by a signing date of July 25.
Palestinian negotiator Ahmad Qouriea told Reuters the two sides would resume "intensive and continuous" talks on Sunday at a northern Israeli town where they took over a hotel for the duration of negotiations.
"This is a preparatory meeting," Palestinian negotiator Hassan Asfour said of Friday's talks. The delegations begin a marathon effort in earnest on Saturday night, after the Jewish Sabbath, staying days and nights at the hotel.
Zichron Yaacov — meaning "memory of Jacob" — was founded in 1882 near the port city of Haifa. Baron Edmond de Rothschild supported the settlement, named after his father, and it was one of the earliest Jewish settlements of the Zionist movement in Palestine.
The site of the talks, the 110-room Moriah Gardens Hotel overlooking the Mediterranean, was closed to journalists Friday.
However, the two sides still disagree on the dimensions of a pullback from the towns of Ramallah and Bethlehem.
Israel has said its troops would only leave the two towns once bypass roads have been paved for Jewish settlers living in the area. The roads could be ready by the end of the year, Israeli officials have said.
The Palestinians demand that in the weeks leading up to a complete withdrawal from Ramallah and Bethlehem, Israel and the PLO share responsibility for security in the towns.
The two sides also plan to make special arrangements for Hebron, a site of frequent frictions between Palestinians and Jewish settlers.
Some 120,000 Jewish settlers live in the West Bank. Settlers have launched a protest campaign against the imminent troop withdrawal, and earlier this week 42 settlers were detained after blocking a West Bank highway.
The U.S. State Department announced Thursday a U.S. diplomat, at the request of Israel and Palestinian authorities, will participate in ongoing peace talks in the Middle East. (Continued on page 7)

Syria, Israel blame each other for failure to agree on new talks

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israel and Syria traded accusations Friday blaming each other for the failure to agree a new date for military talks during a peace shuttle by U.S. envoy Dennis Ross.
"We are waiting for answers from Syria," Itamar Rabinovich, Israel's ambassador to the United States, told reporters after midnight meetings with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.
But Syria on Friday said Israel had been at fault for its "exaggerated demands" for security guarantees to accompany any Israeli withdrawal on the occupied Golan Heights as part of a peace deal between the countries.
Officials and diplomats in Damascus said Syrian-Israeli peace contacts will resume at ambassadorial level soon despite Washington's failure to fix a date for military talks between the two sides.
"An announcement on the meetings of the Syrian and Israeli ambassadors to the U.S. will be made later. The talks would be held as usual under the auspices and participation of the United States," a senior Syrian official said.
He did not specify a date for the resumption of the ambassadors' talks but diplomats expected this to be made soon.
Mr. Ross ended a four-day tour of the region on Friday without fixing a date for Syrian-Israeli military talks, originally planned for mid-July.
He told reporters after holding intensive talks with the Syrian and Israeli leaders that more work was needed to narrow the gaps between both sides.
Mr. Rabinovich, Israel's chief negotiator with Syria, accused Damascus of reneging on a pledge made to U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher last month.
Under the deal, both sides were to have two weeks to analyze the negotiations in Washington by Israel's Chief of Staff General Amnon Shuhak and his Syrian counterpart General Hikmat Shehadi.

THE 65th ANNIVERSARY OF ARAB BANK

On the morning of 14th July 1930 the Arab Bank was established in Jerusalem with a paid up capital of 15000 Palestinian pounds (about US\$ 75000). Arab Bank's head office was moved to Amman and the bank was reincorporated in Jordan.
This year, the Arab Bank celebrates its 65th anniversary. It is a public shareholding company owned by 3000 shareholders from all Arab countries.
Currently, Arab Bank Group has a worldwide diversified network of more than 300 branches. It is one of the principal financial institutions in the Arab World and ranks among the leading international banks in terms of equity, earnings and assets. It is engaged in providing a wide variety of financial services to individuals, corporate and institutional customers, government agencies and other international financial institutions. These services include retail banking, private banking, trade financing, merchant banking, commercial lending, real estate lending and international banking.

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Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Environment Nader Thuheirat Thursday declares final results of the municipal elections that were held Tuesday and Wednesday (Petra photo)

Thuheirat: Elections 'fair and free'

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Nader Thuheirat addressed a press conference Thursday to sum up the results of the municipal elections in Jordan.

Addressing the press one day after the end of the elections which were held Tuesday and Wednesday, the minister said that the elections were held in a fair, free and democratic atmosphere and that there were no violations whatsoever of municipal laws and regulations.

The Islamic Action Front (IAF) candidates won the mayorships in ten councils which included those in Irbid, Madaba and Karak cities and those in the small towns of Lib. Ma'in, Kufrunjeh, Malih Rawda, Kufur Almaa and Ain Jannah, Mr. Thuheirat said.

A total of 23 members of the IAF won as members in several areas including three in Karak, two in Aqaba, four in Jerash, six in Irbid, one in Ajloun, one in Balqa, two in Madaba, five in Zarqa, two in Tafleib, one in Mafraq,

and three in the Amman area, according to the minister.

Results show that the IAF won .018 per cent of the seats and 3.9 per cent of the mayorships.

The ministry, Mr. Thuheirat announced, is currently preparing for a general conference for all mayors, 99 per cent of whom are serving on councils for the first time.

In his reference to cooperative measures between the ministry and the councils where IAF members won seats, the minister said local governments are independent and have authorities invested in them by the municipal law and that therefore they can exercise their work freely and without any intervention from any one.

The ministry, he noted, deals with the councils as representatives of local communities and not on the strength of their political views. Mr. Thuheirat also added that since most of the councils suffer from accumulated debts, assistance from the ministry is always necessary.

The minister estimated the rate of women participation in the elections at 48.6 per cent, while 125 judges chaired committees entrusted with counting the votes among the 259 committees.

All in all, according to Mr. Thuheirat, 13,000 officials were involved in the elections procedures and the number of registered voters was 798,274 of whom 71.33 per cent voted in the elections.

Mr. Thuheirat also announced that the ministry was in the process of expanding its cooperation with the local councils and involving the Cities and Villages Development Bank in financing local projects.

The Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment said in a statement later that the following women won seats in the councils: Amneh Bia'aydeh, Karak, Ibtisam Ushush, Ghor Safi, Aisheh Abu Salem, Irbid, Fandieh Umehish, Huson, Najah Abu Hazim, Mahis, Muiassar Abbadi, Yaraqa, Siham Madani, Fuhais, Faddah Hadidi, Tawal and Muntaha Isheid, Madaba.

49% pass Tawjihi

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Education Thursday announced the results of the Tawjihi examinations of the 1994-1995 scholastic year in the literary, scientific, commercial, agricultural, industrial, nursing and hotel management fields.

The results of the Tawjihi exams, sat for by 77,067 students out of a registered 84,358 in the Kingdom, were announced by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh at a press conference.

Forty-nine per cent of those who sat for their examinations passed, while 1,894 students were disqualified from sitting for their examinations for having exceeded the limit of school absenteeism, Mr. Rawabdeh said.

Percentages of those who passed in each category were 41.2 per cent in the literary stream, 61.5 per cent in the scientific stream, 49 per cent in the commercial, 37.5 per cent in the agricultural, 51.4 per cent in the industrial, 62.4 per cent in nursing and 59.2 per cent in hotel management, according to Mr. Rawabdeh.

Female students came on the top of the list of successful students in the literary, commercial and nursing streams, the minister said.

The minister also stated that results were relatively low in the literary stream and that students in the vocational streams fared much better.

The Ministry of Education apparently chose to delay the announcement of the results until after the results of the municipal elections so as not to influence the course of municipal voting in any way, according to Mr. Rawabdeh.

Mr. Rawabdeh expressed satisfaction with the Tawjihi results and said that the ministry was able to work faster at obtaining this year's results because it had opened marking centres in Karak, Ma'an, Balqa and Zarqa as opposed to only Amman and Irbid in the previous years.

Jordan and Yemen hold trade talks

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Supply Adel Qudah Friday held talks with his Yemeni counterpart, Abdul Rahman Balfadel, to discuss economic and trade relations between Jordan and Yemen. The two ministers reviewed ways in which they can promote economic and trade ties between the two countries.

Dr. Balfadel, who is accompanying President Ali Abdullah Saleh on his visit to Jordan, outlined the areas where investment is possible in Yemen and singled out the fisheries industries as the main area available for investors at the present moment.

The Yemeni minister called on the Jordanian private sector to coordinate with their colleagues in Yemen in order to enhance trade and economic relations between the two countries. He pledged full support from the Yemeni government in this effort.

Seven-year-old killed, 3 injured in road accident

Zarqa (Petra) — A seven-year-old girl was killed and three members of her family were injured Thursday when the small truck they were in overturned near the oil refinery on the Zarqa road.

Rihab Ali Khalaf was killed in the accident while his father Ali (55), her brothers Jihad and

Imad (13 and 10) were injured in the accident.

The three of them were rushed to Prince Hashem hospital and were listed in moderate condition. Hospital sources said the injured suffered fractures and bruises and are being treated at the hospital.

Save water... every drop counts!

Kabariti visits S. Arabia today

(Continued from page 1)

the return of the Saudi ambassador to Jordan to level the charge d'affaires-level of representation at the Saudi mission here since Riyadh recalled the envoy in 1991.

Jordan sent back its ambassador to Riyadh early this year.

In comments to reporters on Thursday, President Saleh said he was not mediating between Jordan and Saudi Arabia but that he briefed King Hussein on the talks he held with King Fahd in Riyadh in his first visit there after the Gulf crisis.

President Saleh said last month that King Fahd had raised the issue with him and told him that he wanted to improve relations with Jordan.

Saudi Arabia had been resisting repeated Jordanian efforts for reconciliation, and the official invitation ex-

tended to Mr. Kabariti was taken as a sign of a shift in that position.

Riyadh has already lifted several restrictions it imposed on Jordanians since the Gulf crisis. These include multiple-entry visas to Jordanians truck drivers who transit through Saudi territory, increased visas for Jordanians to work in Saudi Arabia and permission of family members to join Jordanian expatriates in Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Kabariti's visit to Saudi Arabia comes after an intense effort he launched on the diplomatic level to improve Jordan's ties with Arab countries. He has already visited the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman, Qatar and Bahrain, Saudi Arabia's partners in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) along with Kuwait.

Also contributing to the reconciliation efforts were former Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and former Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Akef Al Fayed, according to the sources. Details of Dr. Majali's and Mr. Fayed's efforts were not immediately available.

According to informed sources, Mr. Kabariti had been holding behind-the-scenes meeting with Arab diplomats from the Gulf since he took over as foreign minister in January.

Better Saudi-Jordanian relations are also expected to lead to an improvement in ties between Jordan and Kuwait.

Sources said Jordan was hoping to reopen its embassy in Kuwait City in the next two months. The mission was closed shortly after the liberation of Kuwait in early 1991.

According to the sources, Mr. Kabariti had been receiving "positive signals" from Kuwait to his efforts to improve relations.



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Friday receives at the Royal Court Ibrahim Abdullah Hassan, who was victimised in the West following the Oklahoma blast last April. (Petra photo)

Prince Hassan receives suspect victim of Oklahoma City blast

Amman (Petra) — His Royal Highness Prince Hassan Thursday received at the Royal Court Ibrahim Abdullah Hassan, a Jordanian citizen, who was recently acquitted by US courts, of charges that he was responsible for the blowing up of the Federal building in Oklahoma early this year.

Mr. Hassan, who lives in the United States, voiced appreciation to Prince Hassan for receiving him and for the interest he showed in his case.

Mr. Hassan, who arrived recently from the U.S., praised Prince Hassan's efforts to amend the image of Islam in the West, defend the interests of Muslims, and to spread Islam's message of tolerance, moral values and principles in the international arena.

Prince Hassao was briefed by Mr. Hassan on the cruel treatment he was

subjected to when held as a suspect after the April Oklahoma bombing which killed 164 people. He spoke about his suffering and that of his family as a result of the inhumane treatment they received at the hands of U.S. officials.

US authorities arrested Mr. Hassan upon receiving information from Americans who said that they saw some people with Middle Eastern features in the area where the explosion took place.

Mr. Hassan, however, said several US officials officially apologised to him after he was found innocent and cleared from the charges labelled against him.

Those who apologised officially were the Oklahoma governor and the Oklahoma representative at the US Senate, he said.

Mr. Hassan thanked the Jordanian government for

its interest in him and for following up on his case. He called upon the international community to learn from this experience and to cease accusations against Arabs and Muslims in the events of terrorist attacks.

Islam does not allow the killing of innocent people, he said.

Mr. Hassan was born in the Israeli-occupied West Bank town of Jenin in 1963. He was in Chicago airport right after the blast where he was first questioned and then released. His Rome-bound luggage arrived without him, where it drew the attention of Italian airport authorities for containing material that 'could be used to make explosives'. Mr. Hassan was 'detained' by British officials in London and sent back to the U.S. for questioning.

Princess Sumaya to graduate 1st batch of college students

Amman (Petra) — Under the Patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Sumaya Bint Al Hassan, the first batch of graduates from Princess Sumaya University College for Technology will be graduated today, after successfully completing requirements of graduation from the college.

According to College Dean Mohammad Qasem Qarioti, this is the first batch of graduates from the college which was established in 1991 to offer bachelor degrees in computer science.

The 72 graduates, he



Princess Sumaya

said, have been trained to join the labour market

immediately upon graduation because of the specialised training they received at the hands of the college. Courses, which focus on computer science and electronic engineering, seek to meet local and Arab labour markets needs for well-trained specialists in computer and electronic engineering. The computer science programme, offered at the college, has been approved by the Ministry of Higher Education, while the electronic engineering programme is still awaiting accreditation by the ministry, Mr. Qarioti said.

Nabulsi: Criticism unfounded

(Continued from page 12)

said, pointing out that there were 329 cases involving a total of JD 450 million.

Given the size of the amount and number of cases of involved, the litigation charges were negligible—0.5 per cent — he pointed out. Another 14 per cent of the expenses represented retrenchment benefits paid to Petra Bank employees when their services were terminated at the outset of the work of the liquidation committee, Dr. Nabulsi said. The rest represented general expenses.

The honorarium paid for the members of the liquidation committee does not exceed an average of JD 1,700 per month since the beginning of the committee's work, he said.

"All the expenses of the liquidation committee are closely supervised and subject to close detailed inspection by the auditors of the Central Bank," he said. "There are very clear contracts and agreements which are verified and authenticated."

In general, he said, the

expenses of the committee represented 7.9 per cent of the amount it collected since it began its work and it is very low compared to the amount it seeks to collect.

The CBJ governor also rejected as out of context a statement taken from the report of Arthur Anderson, The international auditing firm which inspected the books of Petra Bank, that the collapsed bank's total losses amounted to "eight times the capital and reserves."

The liquidation committee has collected much more than Arthur Anderson estimated it would collect, and committee members said recently, they stood to collect another significant part of the dues owed to Petra Bank, Dr. Nabulsi said.

As to Parliament's recent decision to refer the case to the prosecutor general to check for irregularities, Dr. Nabulsi said: "We at the Central Bank of Jordan welcome all inquiries and investigations since we are confident that close inspection would only establish the true facts in the affair."

CROWN PRINCE AWARD: Her Royal Highnesses Princess Rahma Bint Al Hassan Friday attends the graduation of participants in the silver phase of the Crown Prince Award programme. At a special ceremony held at Qala' Ajloun (Ajloun castle), Princess Rahma delivered certificates to 63 girls who took part in the programme, organised by the Crown Prince Award Office. Princess Rahma, along with the

graduating girls, toured Ajloun castle and were briefed by the Department of Antiquities director on the castle's history and the restoration works done by the department. On Thursday Princess Rahma participated in the scientific day activities in Ajloun, which included dismantling and fixing firearms, shooting and mountain climbing (Petra photo)

WHAT'S GOING ON

LECTURE

* Lecture (in Arabic) entitled "The Arab Nation: Present and Future" by former Egyptian Prime Minister Aziz Sedki at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman at 6.30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Works by Khdeir Shukraji at Ab'ad Art Gallery.
* Paintings by Muhannad Bushnaq at Balqa Art Gallery.
* Paintings by Adnan Yahyah at Darat Al Funun.
* Exhibition demonstrating the development of cinema over the past century at the French Cultural Centre.

China's Qian blames U.S. on strained ties, wants pledge

BONN (R) — China's Foreign Minister Qian Qichen blamed the United States Friday for a row between the two countries, worsened by Beijing's arrest of human rights activist Harry Wu on spying charges.

He urged Washington to promise to refrain from action that would strain bilateral relations as a way to heal tensions.

China has been angered by a U.S. decision to allow a visit by Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui, even though Beijing considers Taiwan a rebel province.

Relations were further hit by the arrest of Mr. Wu, a Chinese-American last month.

"The current difficulties in Sino-U.S. relations are caused entirely by the United States," Mr. Qian told a news conference during a state visit by Chinese President Jiang Zemin.

Asked what China expected Washington to do about this, Mr. Qian replied: "I believe it must be stated that

recent actions by the United States have been erroneous actions and that such actions will not be repeated in future."

Mr. Qian reiterated China's position that the case of Mr. Wu, whom the U.S. wants freed immediately, was a matter for the courts.

Mr. Wu, born in China but now a U.S. citizen, spent 19 years in Chinese prison labour camps for dissident activities.

The U.S. State Department maintains he is not a spy and says his detention will damage bilateral relations.

"He went to China not as a tourist, nor to visit any of his relatives, nor to attend any international conference," Mr. Qian said. "What was his purpose? We will see after the trial."

The United States, reacting to Beijing's conditions for repairing damaged ties, Thursday reaffirmed its long-held view that Taiwan is part of China.

The administration also

ruled out moving a U.N. conference from China to another venue, rejecting pressure to retaliate over the June 19 arrest of human rights activist Harry Wu.

Meanwhile, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger warned that Sino-U.S. relations are in a "free fall" and called for a cooling-off period in the dispute over Mr. Wu.

China Thursday softened its tone toward the United States, urging patience in Wu's case but repeating its call for concrete action by Washington to improve ties.

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns replied: "We have shown a great deal of patience." He called for Mr. Wu's immediate release and said it is up to Beijing to act to stabilise the relationship.

The New York Times, reporting on an interview with a senior Chinese official, said Beijing demanded that Mr. Clinton personally reaffirm there is only one China and

Taiwan is part of it, and declare Mr. Lee will not be allowed more U.S. visits.

U.S. officials said China privately made similar requests, prompting recent reaffirmations of the one-China policy.

"There's no need... to restate the American view that there is one China," Mr. McCurry told reporters. "That is consistently stated U.S. policy and we accept the Chinese view that Taiwan is part of China."

As for Mr. Lee visiting the United States, Mr. McCurry said: "According to our policy, President Lee would not be allowed to make an official visit to the United States (but any requests for private visits) would consider on a case-by-case basis." No requests have been made, he said.

U.S. officials said privately it is virtually certain Mr. Lee will not get a visa for a return U.S. visit soon although visits by other Taiwanese officials may be permitted.



The crew of the space shuttle Discovery (bottom left to right) Nancy Currie, Mary Weber, Commander Tom Henricks, (top left to right) Donald Thomas and pilot Kevin Kregel leave the crew quarters at Kennedy Centre for the short trip to launch pad 39-B to board the shuttle. The Discovery is set for an eight-day mission to place a Tracking and Data Relay Satellite in orbit (AFP photo)

Shuttle crew deploys NASA satellite

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (R) — The space shuttle Discovery, delayed five weeks by a launch of the next one, successfully placed a Tracking and Data Relay Satellite in orbit.

Discovery's crew of five astronauts accomplished the chief goal of their mission just a little more than six hours after liftoff when they ejected the massive satellite from the shuttle's open cargo bay.

"That's a deploy," mission specialist Don Thomas said as the \$330 million satellite booster rocket sprang free at 3:55 p.m. EDT (10:55 GMT), 184 miles (296 kms) above the Pacific Ocean near Hawaii.

"Discovery, excellent job. Happy faces here," mission control's Tom Jones said in Houston.

About an hour later, the Boeing interplanetary stage fired automatically to propel the satellite toward its destination, a parking spot 22,000 miles (35,400 kms) over the Pacific.

"The satellite and its booster phase deployed right on time. The tracking and data relay satellite is on its way to its permanent orbital home," NASA commentator James Hartsfield said.

After the satellite deploy-

ment, the rest of the mission will be devoted to secondary experiments in biomedicine, physics, technology and military missile sensor development.

At the helm is Commander Tom Henricks, accompanied by co-pilot Kevin Kregel and mission specialists Don Thomas, Nancy Currie and Mary Ellen Weber.

NASA space controllers have switched to new, ultra-modern headquarters to monitor the Discovery's current mission.

"That old mission control centre is an icon. It's been a symbol for billions of people of humanity's pursuit in space," veteran astronaut Story Musgrave told the Discovery's crew as NASA was celebrating the move to the new \$250 million room late Thursday.

"The next 30 years, hopefully, will carry us just as far as the last 30 years did," Discovery commander Henricks replied.

The switch from the old Mission Control occurred three-and-a-half hours after Discovery deployed the \$330-million satellite that will replace the one that was destroyed in the Challenger explosion on Jan. 28, 1986, killing all seven astronauts on board.

Seoul mayor warns of more disasters

SEOUL (AFP) — Rescuers sifting through the rubble of what used to be a posh shopping centre here dug out 18 more bodies Friday, bringing the confirmed death toll in the June 29 collapse to 281.

More than 360 were still on the missing list.

Seoul City Mayor Cho Soon, meanwhile publicly apologised over the shocking bungle in the count of the missing in the collapse, and warned that more disasters could be waiting to happen.

"In reality, we cannot exclude the possibility that a similar disaster might occur," he said, adding that so many buildings in Seoul had been hurriedly built during rapid industrialisation in the 1970s and 1980s that many had "structural problems."

"I, as the elected mayor of Seoul, deeply apologise for letting this error happen, arousing suspicions among the people and increasing mistrust (in the city government)," Mr. Cho said at a meeting with journalists.

Mr. Cho, running on the ticket of the main opposition Democratic Party, was elected Seoul mayor in the first local elections in 34 years, on June 27, two days before the disaster.

Seoul city officials Thursday suddenly almost doubled the number of missing in the collapsed to 409 after finding another 203 missing in a separate list filed by district officials.

They later cut down the number to 394 after taking out 11 who had already been counted twice or had reappeared.

On Friday, the number of missing decreased further to 367, but this figure probably included several people whose disappearance might have nothing to do with the disaster, officials said.

Prosecutors, meanwhile, questioned a district official about the details surrounding his approval of the modification of the ill-fated Sampong Department Store building.

The official, Cho Nam-il, approved the store's plan to convert warehouse facilities on the first basement floor into sales space in August 1994, which contributed to the weakening of the five-story structure.

Prosecutors also investigated five officials from the Secho District Office, two Seoul City officials and four Sampong executives to see if kickbacks were offered to Mr. Cho, a spokesman said.

Earlier this week, the prosecution arrested two former chiefs of the Secho District Office on charges of taking some \$15,000 each from Sampong in return for overlooking irregularities and modifications.

The mayor blamed the old habit of withholding everything from the public, nurtured among city officials during past military governments.

He also cited the lack of coordination between the headquarters and a district office, which had filed a separate list of the missing.

Philippines accepts U.S. autopsy findings on maid

MANILA (R) — The Philippines, saying it wanted to put behind it a controversy over the hanging of a Filipino maid, Friday accepted key findings in the case by U.S. forensic experts.

Foreign Undersecretary Rodolfo Severino said Manila accepted the U.S. findings that confirmed murder victim Delia Maga died by manual strangulation.

The U.S. result endorses the original Singapore findings that formed part of the prosecution's case against Flor Contemplacion, hanged in Singapore's Changi Prison in March after confessing to killing Maga and a Singaporean boy.

Mr. Severino told a news conference the Philippine government was satisfied with the results of the U.S. forensic examination of Maga's skeletal remains and accepted them as final.

Asked if the government was prepared to normalise relations with Singapore, Severino said: "We have been on the road to normalisation and this is in the interest of both countries."

The examination of Maga's remains by three American scientists was done to resolve conflicting findings of Philippine and Singaporean experts on the cause of her death.

Contemplacion's execution for the murder set off angry protests in the Philippines, where many felt she was innocent.

Relations between the two Asian neighbours had been strained since the hanging.

President Fidel Ramos withdrew the Philippine ambassador to Singapore and threatened to sever diplomatic ties completely if it was found that Contemplacion was unjustly hanged. He also

set up an independent commission to investigate the case.

Scientists from the Philippines National Bureau of Investigation agreed with Singaporean findings that Maga was strangled but said she suffered other injuries that suggested she might have been killed by a man.

Mr. Severino said the third party panel of U.S. experts concluded Maga died of strangulation and that stains in the skull and scapulae were caused by post-mortem discoloration and decomposition.

"The Philippine government is satisfied that the... (panel) has answered all the questions that it was requested to consider by both countries," Mr. Severino said in a statement. "The Philippine government accepts as final the findings..."

Mr. Severino said he hoped the controversy would be put to rest.

"I think we should learn the lessons derived from this and leave the bitter feelings behind us. We have to get on with our lives," he told reporters.

Singapore Friday welcomed the U.S. panel's report upholding the city's findings of the murder case.

"The Third-Party Panel has unequivocally and unanimously upheld the findings of the Singapore pathologists," the Singapore Foreign Ministry said in a press statement Friday.

"The Singapore government accepts the Third-Party Panel's findings, which have resolved with finality the differences in findings between the Singapore pathologists and the (Philippine) experts on the cause of Delia Maga's death," it added.

Nigeria frees some coup suspects

LAGOS (R) — Nigeria's military government has released several people who have faced a secret trial on charges of plotting a coup and has lifted a ban on a newspaper closed last year, newspapers reported Friday.

This Friday said politicians Adisa Akinloye, Titi Ajanaku, Abba Muza and some other detainees were released Thursday after they had appeared before the tribunal trying more than 20 officers and civilians accused of plotting to topple military ruler General Sani Abacha in March.

The Nigerian Tribune newspaper said the fate of the others on trial might be announced at a news conference called by Defence headquarters for later Friday.

Mr. Akinloye and Ms. Ajanaku are political associates of former military ruler General Olusegun Obasanjo. He and his ex-deputy Major-General Shehu Musa Yar'adua are believed to be among the defendants in the secret trial which began in Lagos on June 5.

The authorities have been silent on the trial but local and foreign newspapers say some of the officers have been sentenced to death, Gen. Obasanjo has been given a 25-year jail term and Gen. Yar'adua a life sentence.

Nigeria has been in crisis since a previous military ruler annulled a 1993 presidential election in 1993. The undeclared winner, Moshod Abiola, has been in detention since June 1994 on treason charges for proclaiming himself president. Gen. Abacha seized power in November 1993.

Fellow passenger: Simpson upset, agitated, but still gave autograph

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Upset and agitated, O.J. Simpson sighed, asked for water and made phone calls seeking information about his ex-wife's death as he flew home from Chicago, a fellow passenger testified.

But even in his distress, witness Mark Partridge said Thursday, Simpson was the consummate celebrity, obliging a fan with an autograph on a cocktail napkin.

"I thought, 'what a nice man this was to be doing this,' having heard what I'd heard about the tragedy that was affecting his life," Mr. Partridge testified, hours after the defence sustained a stinging defeat in a ruling by the jury.

With the jury not present, Judge Lance Ito rejected a

defence bid to present a theory that Nicole Brown Simpson was mistakenly murdered by drug himeen out to kill her cocaine-abusing friend Faye Resnick because she owed them money.

Mr. Partridge wrote an eight-page diary about the flight and gave it to attorneys for both sides, but not before copyrighting the document, he acknowledged.

Although Mr. Partridge, a trademark and patent lawyer, said Simpson confided in him and he was able to hear part of the ex-football star's many phone calls during the four-hour flight, the witness wasn't allowed to tell jurors what Simpson said because it was ruled hearsay.

When the men arrived in Los Angeles and Simpson

headed for the door, Mr. Partridge said, "he turned back and what I could see him say was, 'thank you.'"

Simpson, who had pleaded innocent to the killing his ex-wife and her friend Ronald Goldman on June 12, 1994, wiped tears from his eyes. Three of his attorneys patted him on the back. Several jurors stole glances in his direction. Mr. Partridge also seemed to choke up.

Both Mr. Partridge and Hertz Corp. executive Raymond Kilduff, who took Simpson to the airport in Chicago, described him as distraught and said they noticed a bleeding injury on the middle finger of his left hand. Simpson's lawyers say he cut his hand in his hotel room.

Hugh Grant: Prostitute episode was disloyal

LOS ANGELES (R) — British movie star Hugh Grant continued his U.S. round of public mea culpas Wednesday, saying he had been disloyal to his longtime girlfriend Elizabeth Hurley with his encounter with a Hollywood prostitute. "I am very sorry," the star of Four Weddings and A Funeral said on the nationally televised Larry King Live talk show on Cable News Network. Grant pleaded no contest Tuesday to charge of having sex with a prostitute he picked up on Hollywood's famed Sunset Boulevard last month. He was fined \$1,800 and ordered to take a course on the danger of AIDS. Asked about the midnight episode by King, Grant responded, "I don't have excuses... and I'm very sorry." He said it was difficult to say why he did what he did, and that to use excuses offered by various people, such as stress and pressure, "would be a bit false." "In the end you have to come clear and say it was disloyal and shabby and selfish," he added. Grant's shame fuelled speculation on both sides of the Atlantic that Hurley, an English beauty who is one of the world's top models and the "new face" of Estee Lauder cosmetics, had ditched him over the incident after an eight-year relationship. But Grant insisted he and Hurley were still together, at least for now. "We're together, yeah. I can't say everything's going to be rosy. Only time will tell. The wounds are still relatively fresh," he said.

Paloma Picasso to divorce

PARIS (AFP) — Paloma Picasso is to divorce her husband of 17 years Argentine businessman Rafael Lopez Cambil. But the couple, who live in London but separated in January, are to remain friends and business partners, a statement said. "We will remain the best friends in the world," said the statement by Pablo Picasso's daughter, who is behind a range of jewellery and perfumes as well as other ventures. Pledging that they were "united by close links of friendship and trust," the statement said they would "remain associated on an equal basis in all their business affairs." In particular they are jointly behind ventures in fashion accessories and leather work.

George Michael settles row with Sony

LONDON (AFP) — The British pop singer George Michael settled his one-year legal row with the Japanese Sony record company and signed a contract with Virgin, owned by Thorn-EMI, a Virgin spokesman announced. The 32-year-old pop singer, who has sold millions of albums worldwide since starting out as a member of the Wham! group, declined to reveal the terms of his release from Sony or the details of his new contract with Virgin. Jeremy Silver, a Virgin spokesman, said that Michael would be producing his first new album in 12 months' time and that the pop singer's contract covered the whole world except North America, where Michael has signed with Dreamworks SKG. Dreamworks SKG is a new record label co-owned by three Hollywood figures, film-director Steven Spielberg, music producer David Geffen and Jeffrey Katzenberg formerly from Walt Disney. As one of the most famous singers worldwide in recent years, Michael's earnings through these new contracts are likely to total tens of millions of dollars.

Bridge over the sea to Skye completed

LONDON (R) — Engineers Friday made a famous Scottish ballad come true — with a giant new bridge "over the sea to Skye." The £30 million (\$48 million) bridge linking the western island, a favourite tourist destination, to the Scottish mainland has been dogged by controversy, with islanders fearing it will wipe out dozens of jobs on the ferry and complaining the tolls are too high. But Sir Iain Noble, chairman of Skye Bridge Ltd that was lowering the last 800-metre section into place Friday, defended the toll costs for the bridge and said people should start "blessing it rather than bashing it." The bridge is 570 metres long.

U.S. warns guerrillas may strike in S. America

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States has received information that "Middle Eastern terrorists" may be planning to attack a U.S. target somewhere in South America this month, the State Department has announced.

The unusual public announcement gave no further details, and spokesmen for the department said they could add little.

"The United States government has information that Middle Eastern terrorists may be planning an attack against an unspecified U.S. target in South America during July 1995."

Additional information will be provided as it becomes available, "was all the announcement said."

State Department spokesman David Johnson said the information related to an attack south of the Panama-Colombia border, thus excluding Central America and Mexico. But he said it was not known in which country the attack might come.

"We are unable to exclude any form of terrorism," Mr. Johnson said, adding that if it happened it could be directed against U.S. institutions or individuals.

"We are urging U.S. citizens (in South America) to be alert and to be cautious during the remainder of the month of July," Mr. Johnson

said. He said the announcement was not a travel advisory telling Americans not to go to the region.

Mr. Johnson said the announcement had been made under a "no double standards" policy of making public intelligence information that could affect the safety of U.S. citizens.

The policy was introduced after the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, which killed 270 people in 1988. The U.S. government was criticised for having previously warned its diplomats, but not the general public, that a U.S. airliner could be threatened.

More recently, Washington issued an alert throughout the Far East after a bomb attack last December on a Philippine Airlines plane killed a Japanese national.

The attack was blamed on Muslim guerrillas who had sneaked into the Philippines and were believed involved in a plot to kill Pope John Paul during his trip to Manila and to bomb several U.S. commercial aircraft.

Philippine authorities have accused Ramzi Abmad Yousef, now facing trial in New York over a 1993 bomb attack on the World Trade Centre, of being behind the plot. U.S. officials could not say Thursday whether the latest warning was linked with that case.

Exiles: Cuban patrol rammed U.S. protest boat

MIAMI (Agencies) — A Cuban patrol boat and a vessel carrying exiles collided off the Havana coast as a flotilla of powerboats from Florida commemorated the sinking of a refugee boat last year.

A Cuban exile group in Miami said a Cuban gunboat rammed the motor vessel Democracia in Cuban territorial waters about 10 miles from shore, crippling the boat and injuring three people. The U.S. Coast Guard said it was sending rescue ships to the area in response.

Cuba had said earlier Thursday it would do whatever was needed to keep the flotilla of Cuban exile powerboats from entering its waters.

About 100 members of the Florida exile community were aboard more than a dozen powerboats on the 80-mile (128-km) voyage from the Florida Keys to a site six miles (10-km) off Havana.

Organisers said they planned a peaceful protest in Cuban territorial waters to mark the anniversary of the sinking of a refugee boat last July, a disaster that helped trigger a massive exodus of Cuban rafters.

Dramatic television video showed the Cuban patrol boat and the exile vessel colliding. Witnesses said the Cuban ship had pulled alongside and then steered into the "Democracia. On board was

a Dade County commissioner, Pedro Reboredo, who was injured along with two others, the exile group said.

"The Democracia was rammed by two Cuban gunboats," said Maggie Chuss, a spokeswoman for the exile group Brothers To The Rescue. "I understand there is several people hurt, at least three. The boat is taking on water."

Cuban Foreign Ministry spokesman Rafael Dausa Thursday said protest organisers were trying to disrupt already difficult relations between Cuba and the United States.

"Cuba has the right to take, and will take, every measure to prevent any intrusion into our waters," Mr. Dausa told Reuters. "This anti-Cuban adventure does not worry us."

The group had planned to lay wreaths in a tribute to those who died in the sinking of the tugboat, 13 De Marzo, last July 13. The tragedy, believed to have taken about 40 lives, has become a rallying cry for exile protests.

The refugee flow that began in early summer became a flood by August. In all, more than 37,000 Cubans fled the island last year, most ending up in refugee camps at the U.S. Navy base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

In Washington, D.C., about 50 exiles demonstrated in

front of the Cuban diplomatic office Thursday, carrying white caskets representing the children who perished in the sinking. Ten demonstrators were arrested by the U.S. Secret Service, including Cuban writer Armando Valladares.

Although Cuba has denied it, exiles claim the tugboat, stolen by a group of refugees trying to flee their Communist-ruled homeland, sank after being deliberately rammed and sprayed with high-pressure water hoses by Cuban pursuers.

"It was a massacre," said Humberto Sanchez, a flotilla organiser.

In Havana, Cuba's Union of Young Communists (Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas-UJC) had organised a summer festival to start Thursday on the capital's Malecon seafont promenade, which looks out onto the waters of the Florida Straits.

Police closed off large sections of the Malecon to traffic and appeared to have increased the number of officers on duty.

Meanwhile, the U.S. government's first detailed reaction to Cuba's plans to finish building a Russian technology nuclear plant just 144 kilometres from U.S. shores came Thursday as a source of concern.

Russia has pledged \$30 million in aid to Cuba to help defray costs of maintaining the Juraguá plant facility in Cienfuegos province until construction, frozen in 1992 due to Havana's cash crunch, can resume.

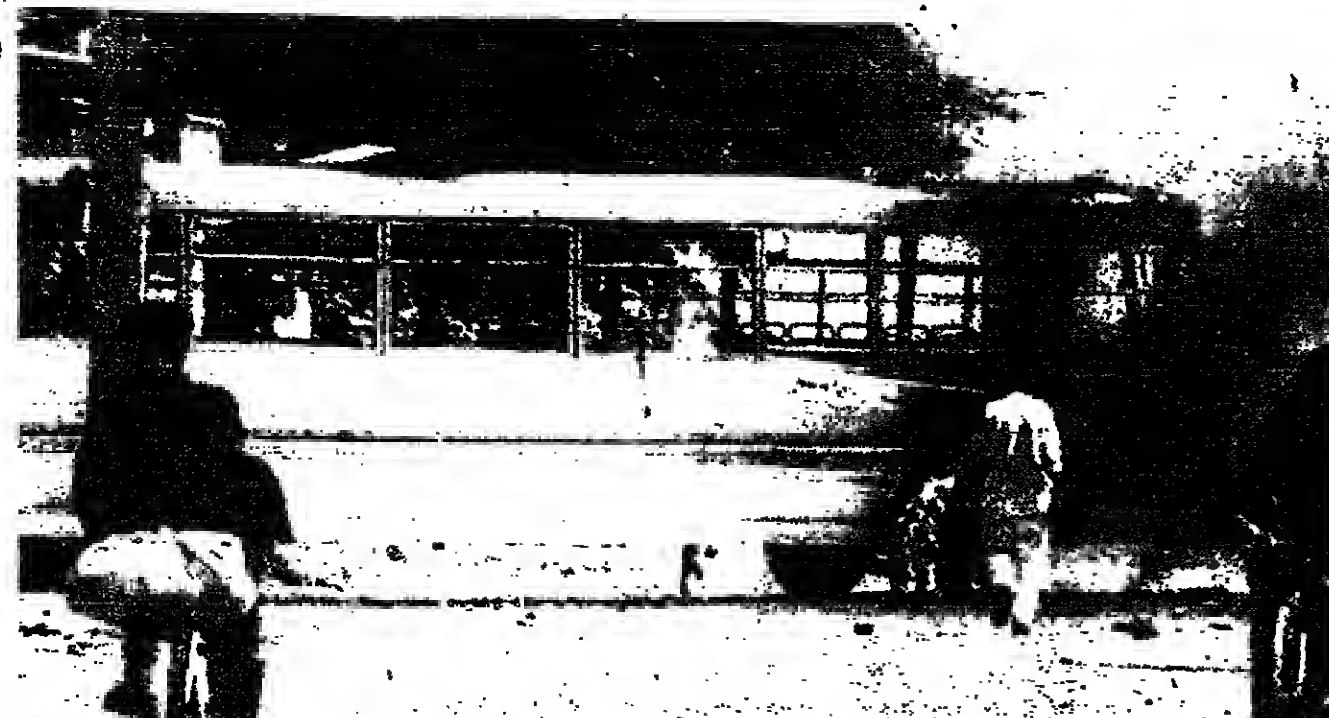
On Wednesday, Cuba reaffirmed its commitment to completing the nuclear reactor project, which Cuban President Fidel Castro is determined to get on line to help decrease Havana's costly dependence on oil to operate its power plants.

Cuban Deputy Industry Minister Rodrigo Ortiz pledged in an interview with the Communist Party newspaper Granma that the reactor would be built "in compliance with all safety standards and with maximum transparency."

And Mr. Ortiz said an economic and technical feasibility study on renewing construction would be finished in late July.

While the State Department in May voiced some safety concerns in passing about the reactor after Russian officials said a consortium of companies from Russia, Brazil, Britain, Germany and Italy was willing to help finish the project, the U.S. government never has opposed it publicly or offered help with any alternative.

World News



Karachi Residents pass a burning bus, which was set ablaze by a group of armed men in the troubled area of the strife-torn city as at least eight people were shot dead and several others were injured during clashes by powerful ethnic-based Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) and the police (AFP photo)

Hundreds attend funeral of 5 killed in Karachi

KARACHI (AFP) — Hundreds of workers and supporters of a powerful ethnic group thronged Karachi's industrial district Friday for the funeral of five people killed in a gun battle with security forces, residents said.

Thursday when police ordered them to vacate the house in suburban Korangi, officials said. Five militants and a policeman were killed in the exchange of gunfire.

In a statement from London, self-exiled MQM leader Altaf Hussain blamed security forces for the killings.

Residents said hundreds of emotional MQM workers and supporters turned out for the funeral. Sporadic gunfire was heard in the area but no casualties were reported.

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's government has blamed the MQM for much of the violence in Karachi, where some 2,000 people have died in political and religious troubles in the past 18 months.

MQM represents a large Urdu-speaking community which migrated here after the 1947 partition of the subcontinent. The group denies involvement in terrorism and accuses the government of victimising the settlers.

The group and the government are involved in talks aimed at ending the violence with the third round to commence here Sunday.

MQM has put forward 18 demands, including quotas for the community in government jobs and the police force and the withdrawal of criminal cases against MQM members.

The government proposed 21 counter demands, asking the MQM to close its "training camps in India" and to publicly denounce violence, officials said. The party denies foreign backing of its movement.

Heavy battles rage in Sri Lanka, rebels down plane

COLOMBO (AFP) — Heavy gun-battles raged in northern Sri Lanka Friday as Tamil Tiger guerrillas shot down an aircraft and raided an army defence line, leaving up to 100 soldiers and rebels killed, officials said.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) scored a direct hit on a twin-engineered Argentinian-built Pucara as it climbed after a bombing mission to support the ground troops resisting the rebel assault, the military said.

Details were sketchy of the 10-hour close-quarter battle but defence officials said an almost equal number of Tigers and rebels may have been killed making up a total of "about 100."

Another 42 soldiers were wounded in the pre-dawn attack and evacuated to a hospital in the north as air force jets bombed the suspected anti-aircraft gun positions of the rebels, military spokesman Sarath Munasinghe said.

He said the Pucara aircraft piloted by a single airman was supporting ground troops to beat off the simultaneous assault carried out by 500 to 600 LTTE fighters when he was hit by a surface-to-air missile.

"The Pucara was carrying out a steep climb after diving to bomb target," the spokesman said adding that air operations continued despite the setback to the airforce.

The wreckage fell behind army lines in a 78-square kilometre (31-square-mile) area captured from the Tamil Tigers after Operation Leap Forward was launched Sunday inside the LTTE stronghold of the Jaffna peninsula.

The government has already categorically ruled out any fresh negotiations with the LTTE after it pulled out of peace talks with Colombo on April 19 to resume its struggle for an independent homeland called Eelam.

Tigers had offered little resistance to the 10,000 strong military drive as they advanced in two columns towards Jaffna town from the Palaly military complex located at the northern tip of the embattled peninsula.

A recently retired army officer said the LTTE blasted a 30-metre bridge just outside Jaffna two days ago to slow down an onslaught on the heavily built up town. Already there are reports of heavy civilian casualties.

A Christian priest who left Jaffna Tuesday and arrived here Thursday said most of the civilians left the battle zone and only a handful of elderly people remained to take advantage of the government's rehabilitation package.

Travellers also report that at least 145 people were killed and another 350 wounded to the fighting while an estimated 300,000 men, women and children had been left homeless.

Irish premier holds surprise talks with Adams, Hume

DUBLIN (R) — Irish Prime Minister John Bruton had unscheduled talks Friday with Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams and moderate nationalist John Hume to try to break a deadlock in Northern Ireland's peace process.

Irish officials said Foreign Minister Dick Spring, another key player in moves to forge a lasting settlement for the British province, discussed the stalemate.

The peace process is stalled over British demands that Sinn Fein get the Irish Republican Army (IRA), which declared a ceasefire 10 months ago after 25 years of battle, to decommission its arsenals before it can join all-party talks.

Mr. Adams earlier accused Britain of creating a wave of street protests in Northern Ireland by refusing to negotiate with his party until its IRA guerrilla fighters surrendered their arms.

Against a background of nightly violence after 10 months of peace, the Sinn Fein president said in an article in the Irish Times that Britain's intransigence over IRA arms was dangerous.

"It is, in fact, forcing politics back on to the street," said Mr. Adams, whose party — the IRA's political wing — seeks to end British rule of Northern Ireland.

Firebombs were thrown in Catholic areas of Belfast during the night, the latest incident in a wave of unrest that erupted after Britain released a soldier who was jailed for life for shooting dead a Catholic teenager while on patrol.

No shots have been fired in the province since last year's ceasefires by the IRA and its pro-British "loyalist" foes, but the demonstrations have worrying echoes of the start of Northern Ireland's "Troubles" in 1969.

Civil unrest by the Catholic minority and Protestant majority deteriorated into a guerrilla war which killed 3,200 and turned the province into a fortress until the ceasefires.

Mr. Adams demanded that Sinn Fein, which is supported by Irish nationalists and Catholics, be invited immediately to all-party talks to find a lasting solution to the conflict.

"A peace process, to bring about a peace settlement, requires peace talks. This is the next essential step."

He accused the British government of creating obstacles to a lasting Northern Ireland peace by insisting that its IRA guerrilla supporters start decommissioning their arsenals to win a place for Sinn Fein at peace talks.

Japan campaign brings out the beast in Kaifu

HAMAMATSU, Japan (R) — Japan's nice-guy former Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu swapped his smile for a snarl Friday to fight for his candidate in a ruling-party stronghold on Japan's Pacific seaboard.

Mr. Kaifu took his New Frontier Party's (NFP) calls for drastic reform to Shizuoka prefecture, a district 200 kilometres west of Tokyo, where the conservative culture of tea and fruit farmers clashes with high-technology manufacturers.

The NFP president, one of Japan's most popular prime ministers during his 1989 to 1991 term, had logged over 7,300 kilometres as of Friday in a gruelling campaign for July 23 elections, the first nationwide poll since 1993.

The elections to fill half the 252 seats of the Upper House of parliament "poses the question of whether Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama's government should be allowed to continue," Mr. Kaifu told reporters.

"Every step we take is with the aim of putting an end to the Murayama administration," he said.

Mr. Kaifu, dubbed "Mr. Clean" for a Quixotic reform programme he began in the dirtiest days of Japanese politics, has a potent mixture of policy, party and personal reasons to take aim at the current government.

The Socialist Murayama heads a coalition government with the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the party that first elevated him from obscurity and then dumped Mr. Kaifu as prime minister in 1991 at the height of his popularity.

Those two largest members of Mr. Murayama's coalition, Mr. Kaifu reminded Shizuoka voters, for decades fought pitched battles for their vote before joining hands in June, 1994, in an awkward left-right alliance.

"They overcome their fundamental policy differences through easy compromises and can't achieve significant reform because they spend all their energy just staying in power," Mr. Kaifu said.

The aggressive tone of the 63-year-old Kaifu, dropped as prime minister by the LDP because he pushed too hard for reform of Japan's scandal-ridden politics, surprised listeners who had thought of him as clean and likable but ineffectual.

"I'm encouraged because he really seems to be determined to make things happen," said businessman Yoshihiko Hakamata, one of 1,000 people who stopped to hear Mr. Kaifu on the stump.

Earlier in the week, a senior NFP official told the news media he thought his party lacked the will and energy to do its opposition duty and topple the unpopular Murayama government.

The NFP, formed last December from nine smaller parties, has had to fight to keep together its unwieldy group of Buddhists, conservatives, trade unionists and young reformists.

But Mr. Kaifu, lobbying for local candidate Masataka Suzuki against incumbents from the LDP and the Socialists, proffered a list of plans to cut Japan's bloated bureaucracy and tame the red tape that strangles entrepreneurs.

The deregulation message plays well in Shizuoka, where world-class electronics component and musical instrument industries are getting crushed by the yen's appreciation.

Mr. Kaifu's personal endorsement of Suzuki, a former military bureaucrat and security expert, coincided conveniently with a ruling coalition rift that emerged Friday over the Socialists' call for deep cuts in defence spending.

NFP criticisms of Mr. Murayama's spotty record in crisis management also addressed deeper fears in Shizuoka, and earthquake-prone district that is also home to the national headquarters of Aum Shinri Kyo, the doomsday cult accused of gassing Tokyo subway last March.

Yeltsin sets Dec. 17 date for parliamentary elections

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin Friday set Dec. 17 as the date for new elections to Russia's lower house of parliament, removing lingering doubts that they could be postponed.

Mr. Yeltsin, 64, gave the firm date for State Duma elections in a decree apparently issued from the Moscow hospital where he has been recovering from a heart problem since Tuesday.

Opposition parties, some of whose leaders had alleged that Mr. Yeltsin secretly planned to put off the election, welcomed the announcement and began girding themselves for the contest.

"Passions will now subside about whether the elections are to be held or not and that is the most important thing," Duma Chairman Ivan Rybin told reporters.

The last election to the Duma was held on Dec. 12, 1993, when the 450 deputies were elected for only a two-year term following the dissolution of the previous parliament by Mr. Yeltsin.

Under election law, Mr. Yeltsin could have left declaring the December State Duma poll date until mid-August.

His early announcement served to demonstrate he was still firmly in control despite his illness. Some opposition figures have used his health problems to renew charges that he is not physically fit.

The decree, however, failed to clear up how and when the smaller Federation Council (upper house) would be elected.

The Duma wants the upper chamber to be elected by popular vote as it was in 1993. But the Federation Council itself and some Kremlin officials want a House composed of regional delegates appointed by the Kremlin and regional bodies without election.

The Duma elected in December will serve for a full four-year term, unlike the present transitional one.

Real power lies in the hands of the president. But Mr. Yeltsin, whose term expires in June 1996, will all the same be hoping the elections will produce a less hostile Duma than the current one.

Bristling with Communists, Agrarians and ultranationalists, it has criticised Mr. Yeltsin and the government of Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin relentlessly over economic policy and the Chechnya conflict.

But Mr. Yeltsin failed last month in an attempt to modify a key election law that would have lessened the chances of extremist parties such as the Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR) of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy making big gains again.

Many opposition figures had said that Mr. Yeltsin was secretly harbouring plans to put back the elections because he was afraid parties unfavourable to his policies would be brought to power.

Mr. Zhirinovskiy Friday welcomed news that Mr. Yeltsin had fixed a firm date for elections. In typically flamboyant style, he said: "We hope for an even bigger representation in the Duma and not less than 100 seats." The LDPR at present holds 50 seats.

Liberal Yegor Gaidar, who heads the Russia's Choice faction, was pleased by the early poll announcement. "I have always said the earlier it is fixed, the simpler it will be to organise."

Mikhail Lapshin, head of the Agrarian Party faction which also holds 50 seats, said: "It is very good that it was not announced in August. Now we have five months to prepare ourselves."

Yeltsin postpones Norway visit

President Yeltsin, recuperating in hospital after a heart problem, Friday postponed plans to visit Norway next week.

The decision, announced by an aide and confirmed by Norway's Foreign Ministry, looked set to renew speculation over the seriousness of the illness which forced the 64-year-old Kremlin chief to be admitted to hospital Tuesday.

"Russian President Boris Yeltsin is postponing his visit to Norway, scheduled for July 19-21," Viktor Ilyushin, Mr. Yeltsin's most senior adviser, told ITAR-TASS news agency. He gave no reasons.

In Oslo, Norwegian Foreign Ministry spokesman Kaare Eltervaag said: "The Russians have told us informally that the visit is postponed. We have been given no new date, nor have they given us any reason (for postponing the visit)."

Kremlin officials had said Thursday that Mr. Yeltsin was expected to leave hospital Monday and still intended to visit Norway.

Mr. Yeltsin's press secretary Sergei Medvedev could not immediately be reached to explain why the president had changed his mind.

Mr. Yeltsin was taken to hospital with an ischaemic heart condition — a blood supply problem — but reports from his aides have indicated he is recovering.

Chechen peace talks postponed for a day

MOSCOW (R) — Peace talks due to resume in Chechnya's capital Grozny Friday have been postponed for the day, chief mediator Sandor Meszaros said.

ITAR-TASS news agency quoted Mr. Meszaros, head of an Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe delegation which is hosting the talks, as saying negotiations would not resume Friday. He gave no reason for the delay and did not say when they would be resumed.

Russian News Agency (RIA) said rebel negotiators, who went into Chechnya's southern mountains to consult separatist leader Dzhokhar Dudayev on a draft final document, did not show up for the talks which were scheduled to resume in Grozny at 4 p.m. (1200 GMT).

Peace talks had been due to restart in the afternoon after a day's break, in which rebel negotiators went to consult their leaders and Moscow's delegates considered their views on a draft final document.

RIA said chief Chechen negotiator Usman Imaev had gone into the mountains to talk over the draft with rebel commanders.

The agency gave no reason for the delay in the peace talks, which started last month in earnest after a Chechen hostage-taking raid on a southern Russian town.

Negotiators from both sides have sent conflicting signals since Monday on hopes of resolving political disputes, the most difficult of which is breakaway Chechnya's constitutional status.

Russian Interior Minister Anatoly Kulikov, who is taking part in the talks, told RIA Thursday he believed Mr. Imaev had gone into the mountains to try to convince rebel commanders to accept Moscow's conditions.

Mr. Kulikov's said failure to reach agreement would result in Russia resuming efforts to wipe out rebel resistance.

"We can give no more ground," RIA quoted Mr. Kulikov as saying. "And if Imaev brings a negative answer, this will mean a return to actions forcibly to disarm the illegal formations."

The negotiators have sent conflicting signals since saying they had found enough common ground Monday to raise hopes of resolving outstanding political disputes.

Burma dissident willing to meet with junta

RANGOON (AFP) — Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi said Friday that she was willing to negotiate with Burma's ruling junta, but appealed to the world community to wait before rushing into the country with development aid.

"There is no way we can achieve reconciliation unless we talk with each other," she told a packed news conference at her lakeside home, adding that any contacts with the junta "would come firstly in the form of dialogue."

But she also urged nations and world institutions not to rush in and offer Burma development aid before assessing the country's political situation.

"It is too soon to rush into anything," she said, adding that potential donors "should wait and see whether there is a genuine move towards reconciliation and a democratic system of government."

"I have been released. That is all. Nothing else has changed," she said.

Ms. Suu Kyi said that while she was willing to meet with the junta, any contact could only occur following discussions with her colleagues in the National League for Democracy (NLD), who she has met daily since her release from house arrest.

"We have every intention of asking the SLORC for a meeting, but only after we have decided how we wish to proceed," she said, referring to the State Law and Order Restoration Council, as the junta is officially known.

She said earlier this week that she would be willing to compromise and that all sides had to be flexible if they were to bring democracy to Burma. But she added that she has not had any contact with the SLORC since her release.

Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi said that she and her NLD colleagues had not yet discussed whether they would make the further release of political prisoners a pre-condition for talks with the SLORC.

Ms. Suu Kyi added that the SLORC, which seized power in 1988, has recently negotiated ceasefire agreements with most of the armed ethnic groups that have been fighting Rangoon for more autonomy since independence in 1948.

"But a ceasefire is not a permanent peace," she added.



Burmese leading opposition politician Aung San Suu Kyi shares a laugh with U Kyi Maung (left), acting head of the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) after she was released from her house arrest nearly six years ago (AFP photo)

added. "What we want is permanent peace."

Suu Kyi declined to discuss here meetings last year with SLORC leaders Gen. Than Shwe and Gen. Khin Nyunt, saying they had agreed at her request not to make public any details to avoid misunderstandings.

But she said she found Gen. Khin Nyunt to be polite and "quite charming," and that Gen. Than Shwe was "straightforward."

Ms. Suu Kyi has been meeting at length with other NLD leaders since her release Monday from six years of house arrest. She declined to give details of their discussions.

Ms. Suu Kyi co-founded the NLD in 1989 and campaigned widely for the party ahead of elections that the NLD swept in April 1990.

The SLORC subsequently ignored the poll results and refused to relinquish power. Instead it clamped down on the opposition, arresting top NLD leaders and forcing others to flee to the jungle or across the border into Thailand.

Now, she said, the NLD was not trying to rebuild the party the way it was.

"We don't want the NLD to be just exactly the way it was in 1989, we want it to be what the NLD ought to be in 1995," she said without elaborating.

Asked about the national convention drafting Burma's new constitution, she reiterated that she still had reservations about it.

"There have to be lots of changes" for the benefit of the people, she said. "We would hope that these changes can be negotiated. It should guarantee democracy for Burma."

Ms. Suu Kyi said she did not rule out a transitional government in which the Burmese military shared political power with civilians, in an interview in the New York Times Friday.

The 50-year-old opposition leader said power-sharing was "something we must look at."

She said she would discuss the proposal with her supporters in the democracy movement.

"I'm aware that this is what they have done in South Africa, where they have agreed to a transitional period," Ms. Suu Kyi said referring to the power sharing arrangement reached between black and white South Africans prior to last year's elections.

"And I think it's been far more successful than some people had thought," she said.

Asked whether a civilian government should seek retribution against military officers involved in human rights abuses, the opposition leader said: "There's nothing good about vengeance — it's most ignoble feeling."

She said it was an issue she had thought "very deeply" about, adding, "we would try to make some sort of distinction between the person and the deed, because all of us have weaknesses."

"I don't think it's vengeance that people should want," Ms. Suu Kyi said. "I think what they should work for is the truth."

In another interview published Friday in London's Daily Telegraph, the opposition leader said she bore no ill-will towards the military regime that held her under house arrest.

"I truly feel no ill-will towards my captors. This is not just something I'm saying to be tactful or diplomatic. I myself sometimes wonder why that is."

She said she had concluded it was partly because she associated the Burmese army with her father, Aung San, who secured Burma's independence from Britain.

"Most of my photos show my father in uniform so I grew up thinking of the army as part of the family."

Ms. Suu Kyi also said the conditions of her detention were quite tolerable.

"I have to confess that I really did not find it very difficult to be on my own. Of course, I missed my family and my colleagues, but I tried not to think about that. I knew there were people suffering much more than me."

She added, "I had my radio and my books. I know my colleagues in prison had neither and were going through a much more difficult time."

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation
Established 1975

مؤسس: د. محمد عبد الله النور
مدير: د. محمد عبد الله النور

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Facsimile: 696183

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays.
Subscription and advertising rates are available from the
Jordan Times advertising department.

Hopes rekindled

THE VISIT of President Ali Abdullah of Jordan exemplifies the excellent relationship between the Yemeni and Jordanian leaderships and peoples. The record of the two countries relations throughout the past decade offers an ideal model of dependable and friendly ties. The warm, stable and principled personal relations between His Majesty King Hussein and President Saleh withstood many challenges. Jordanian-Yemeni relationships remained cordial, solid and constructive at all times. This is the kind of Arab-Arab relations that we would like to see developing between all the Arab peoples without exception.

All Arab monarchs and presidents are in need of the need to forge firm Arab relationships but not much of that talk has ever been translated into deeds. Contacts between the Arab countries remain strained and several confederations of Arab "leagues" have surfaced to give expression to this contemporary quintessentialism of Arab norm. Iraq and its people remain isolated and under siege not only by the outside world but also by the Arab Nation itself as if the Iraqis were not an integral part of the Arab world.

At a time when we are seeking to normalise relations with Israel and open our gates to its people for trade and commerce, the Arab frontiers must not remain sealed with Baghdad. Three years after the Gulf crisis subsided, fall-outs of that dark episode continue to strain inter-Arab relations. But with the good offices of leaders like President Saleh and the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia we hope that soon we will see Arab relations restored to their pre-Gulf crisis norm.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

SULTAN AL HATTAB, a writer in Al Ra'i, condemned Turkey's repeated incursions into Iraq under the pretext of liberating the Kurdish rebels. It is not possible for Turkey to liberate the Kurdish population from their lands and stifle the spirit of their resistance and the rebellion in Kurdistan with one, two or tens of military offensives against the oppressed population, said the writer. Indeed, the Kurds are unable to repress the Kurds who are fighting Ankara only in northern Iraq but in eastern Turkey and in Turkish cities and streets, and it is not the right of Turkey to annihilate the Kurds because they are fighting for their freedom, said the writer. Criticising the United States and the United Nations for condoning Turkey's invasion of Iraq territory, the writer said that when Iraq invaded Kuwait, Washington led a war on Baghdad but it is doing nothing against Turkey's repeated invasions of Iraq not only because it is an ally of the United States and the NATO alliance but because Turkey's invasion serves the purpose of the Western alliance, said the writer. As long as the Arab World is keeping silent about repeated Turkish invasions of northern Iraq and as long as the Arab states remain hostage to the will and orders of the United States, warned the writer, one could soon witness Turkey's troops settling permanently in northern Iraq under the pretext of guarding the alleged Kurdish raids on Turkish territory.

ANOTHER COLUMNIST in Al Ra'i, daily said it seems that the United States is determined to keep the sanctions imposed on the Iraqi people whether they destroyed their own destruction weapons or not. By repeatedly deciding to maintain the embargo on Iraq, the United Nations, which is supposed to come to the help of the oppressed nations and people is a party to the murder of a whole nation, said Mahmud Rimawi. Since Baghdad has implemented the U.N. resolutions, pulled out its forces from Kuwait, recognised the international boundaries with the Gulf state and expressed the desire to fully cooperate with the world community, there can be no reason for maintaining the sanctions on the Iraqi people, said the writer.

Jordanian Perspective

By Dr. Musa Keilani

Democracy digging deeper roots

THE MUNICIPAL elections that Jordan held last week were another landmark in the democratisation and political pluralism in the Kingdom. Granted there were a few nuances, but in general the conduct of the elections and the way the government went around organising them showed that Jordan is a fast learner and a bright student of political evolution.

It was indeed another feather in the cap of Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, who also oversaw the Kingdom's first general elections in 1989 after a hiatus of more than three decades.

It is highly noteworthy that it was mostly apolitical candidates who won the majority of seats in the municipal elections, and it would be naive to characterise them as anything but ordinary Jordanians from the heart of the Kingdom who will, hopefully, strive to serve their communities.

At least six political parties ran publicly announced candidates while other parties chose to keep the identities of their nominees secret. The final results, however, showed that candidates of political parties had won only a negligible share of the seats. This indicates that Jordanians are shying away from embracing political parties, as the main vehicle in their mainstream life regardless of their political ideologies. This is not surprising also, because less than two per cent of the electorate are registered members of political parties although the new Political Parties Law was enacted almost three years ago.

It was regrettable that the Islamic Action Front (IAF), the best organised political party in Jordan, chose to withdraw from the municipal races in its strongholds of Zarqa and Russeifa. An IAF victory in those two municipalities would not have posed a challenge for anyone. If anything, the track record of the previous IAF-dominated council in Zarqa stands far above others in Jordan in terms of services to the community. It was under this council that Zarqa had its first university, three community colleges, 12 schools and dozens of Zakat committees which served the poor among Zarqa residents. Furthermore, it was under the IAF-led council that Zarqa Municipality settled its public debts. In fact, the Zarqa council under the IAF set a model for most other municipalities in Jordan. For sure, we can expect to see a similar record in Madaba and Karak where the IAF won this

time around.

An additional 10 IAF members joining the 3,000-plus municipal officials throughout the Kingdom would not have upset the overall balance in local administrative powers.

The arrest of drivers who were apparently taking IAF voters to polling centres on charges of silly traffic violations in Zarqa was rather uncalled for. Such actions obviously alienated the IAF, which, already unhappy with what it saw as other moves aimed at undermining its chances in the elections, registered a strong protest by boycotting Wednesday's session of the Lower House of Parliament.

Alienating the well organised political party in the Kingdom, regardless of its beliefs and ideology, does not go well with the democratisation process. The IAF is very much part and parcel of our political life. IAF leaders and supporters are very much from among us, and there is no reason for them to feel alienated from mainstream life. Such alienation would only mar prospects for a harmonious relationship between political parties and the regime.

That was perhaps the only blemish in the nationwide municipal elections apart from what was unmistakably voter apathy. On the second count, the government did its best to attract voters to the polling booths, but it cannot do anything beyond reminding voters of their duty towards themselves and towards the community that they belong to. It is here that one would have expected the political parties to play a key and influential role by convincing the voters to leave their homes and spend a couple of hours on a public holiday to vote for who could serve their community best.

Effectively, the low turnout on Tuesday and Wednesday meant that Jordanians need more orientation on their rights and responsibilities as well as a conviction that it is largely up to them to decide the level and quality of services for their communities because they have the power to elect the candidates they feel are best suited to serve them. Complaining that previous councils did not serve the communities well is not an answer or justification for staying away from the elections. If anything, such a complaint should be much more the key reason for the voters to seek to rectify the situation.



Egyptians look out for possible vice-president

By Jonathan Wright
Ruler

CAIRO — Vice-president or no vice-president? What is the question many Egyptians are asking in the wake of the Muslim militant attempt to assassinate President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa last month.

When Mr. Mubarak told members of the armed forces this week that the days of one-man rule were over, it might have been a sign that a deputy was finally on the way, after 13 years without.

Not so, one government source said on Thursday. "He meant that there is the constitution and there are institutions and there is no need to worry," he said.

But worry is just what some foreign governments did in the three hours between the time gunmen opened fire at Mr. Mubarak's motorcade on June 26 and the time he appeared on television, safe and sound back in Cairo.

"My government was seriously concerned. They kept ringing up the embassy for confirmation he was alive and well," said a diplomat from a Middle East state which sees stability in Egypt as important to the future of the Middle East

peace process.

"None of us have the faintest idea how long it would take a successor to find his feet," he added.

The Egyptian constitution does lay down procedures in case the president is killed or incapacitated.

The speaker of parliament would take over as acting head of state for up to 60 days and during that time he would have parliament nominate and vote on a successor. As in presidential elections, the choice then goes to a public referendum.

In the last two cases, when Gamal Abdul Nasser died in 1970 and Anwar Sadat was assassinated in 1981, a vice president was ready in the wings and the transition went smoothly.

Nasser often had up to three vice presidents, mostly glorified protocol officers, and Sadat groomed Mr. Mubarak as his successor for the six years from 1975 onwards.

But Mr. Mubarak has chosen not to name a deputy throughout his 13 years in office, apparently because he has not found anyone he thinks wholly fit for the job.

After the referendum that confirmed him for a third six-year term in office

in 1993, Mr. Mubarak told a Western newspaper that if he named a vice-president people would assume he had appointed a successor.

He told an Arabic paper that he feared the country would split in two if he appointed a deputy.

The government source suggested the president was holding his cards close to his chest but speculated that he probably would not choose now to act.

"It's entirely up to the president. He can name one or more vice presidents but Egypt is not a monarchy and we don't want a crown prince. Look at what happened in Qatar," he added.

The old crown prince of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, deposed his father last month.

Although the republic in form, the Egyptian state retains some features of the country's Pharaonic past, like awe in the face of authority and a bureaucratic approach to policy making.

Once the leader has appointed a successor, it becomes almost impossible to unseat him.

And, given the government's failure to let civilian politicians cultivate mass followings, the most likely successor to Mr. Mubarak will again be from the

armed forces, like Nasser, Sadat and Mr. Mubarak himself.

A pseudonymous article in the Washington-based Middle East Journal said the most obvious military successor, Defence Minister Mohammad Hussein Tantawi, was by no means a sure bet.

"The existence of competitive patronage networks within the officer corps... as well as Tantawi's limited popularity, have placed the higher circles of the general officer corps in a state of unease," added the article, apparently by someone with access to the Egyptian political elite and with detailed knowledge of the military.

"In the event of death... of the president, factionalism within the high command could be a serious problem... for the vital questions of presidential succession to be so relatively open, and the military backstop even to be in question, suggests the political fragility of the system," it added.

But the government source dismissed speculation that a succession could be messy. "The nature of the nation is that things take place very smoothly," he said.

THE WEEK IN PRINT

New councils should serve communities

By Ella Nasrallah

THE LOCAL Arabic daily last week tackled the municipal elections, other domestic affairs, the situation in Iraq and Arab affairs as well as the Middle East question in light of Israeli practices.

Congratulating the winners in the municipal elections in the past week, Al Aswaj daily said that now that they assumed new positions, the municipal council members and the mayors should realise the heavy responsibility they shoulder towards their local communities. Since the first moment the elected council members will be the focus of attention of people who expect from them diligence and dedication in serving the local residents and in living up to expectations, said the daily. The paper said that the new councils are expected to help contribute to the success of the democratic process in Jordan.

Taher Al Adwan congratulated Iman Feizmat, the first woman mayor to be elected in Jordan, saying that her success reflects the Jordanian people's maturity and their determination to choose the best and more eligible people for shouldering the responsibility of municipal services.

But the writer said that it is to be regretted that elections are still influenced by clans and families in Jordan, something which could adversely affect the behaviour of some members of the municipal councils who tend to favour their own relatives in the course of their work. The writer said that to overcome this predicament, the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs ought to merge small towns councils and widen the base of the electorate so as the public will have a wider choice of candidates and so that the best can only be chosen.

With the exception of the deputies of the Amman districts, most of Parliament members in various governorates were involved one way or another in the municipal elections, said Bassam Haddadin, a writer in Al Dustour. He said that this indicates that the municipal elections were politicised and the deputies hoped that their involvement in the local elections will boost their image and give them advantage in the coming parliamentary elections. The writer expressed the view that the political parties in Jordan have had little effect on the outcome of the municipal elections which were, to a large extent, dominated by tribal and families influence.

A columnist in Al Dustour supported the view of the government by saying that the municipal elections were fair and free without any intervention on the part of the government. The fact that some political groups did not achieve success in certain districts does not mean that the government had had its influence or intervened in a manner of serve these groups defeat but clearly indicates that the success came to many candidates as a result of tribal and family support, argued Mohammad Daoud.

The writer said that a study of the list of the candidates can clearly realise that most of the candidates had relied on the support of their families and their clans, especially in areas outside the capital.

A writer in Al Dustour said that most of the candidates who won the seats in the municipal councils did so depending on the support they received from their relatives and clans and family members and therefore candidates with no tribal clout had poor chance of succeeding though they could be far better qualified for the post, Mohammad Kawash said that in light of the circumstances, one can say that the elections were undemocratic because the voters were bound by family considerations to choose what they are told and not basing their decisions on reason. The writer said that this predicament is to allow only half of the municipal council to be elected by the local residents leaving the

other half to be appointed by the government which was quite successful in choosing former committees to handle the affairs of the local councils in the past years.

A writer in Al Ra'i daily demanded that the government should try its best to rid the Kingdom of the guest workers and open the way for Jordanians to take up their place. Saying that the guest workers' jobs can be filled by the Jordanian job seekers in bakeries, restaurants and many other places, Tareq Masarweh said that the government must have realised by now this fact and also that the non-Jordanians, like those who wash cars in the streets, deprive the car wash stations of their income and that the service they claim they are doing is not up to the required standard in most of the jobs they fill. He said Japan, which needs workers for its industry, is resorting to robots to carry out the work while Israel's factories have related very limited numbers of Romanian and Bulgarian workers for a limited period of time but will get rid of them.

Fahd Al Fanek, a writer in Al Ra'i urged Parliament to speed up its review and endorsement of a package of tax laws so that they would be ready before the coming Amman summit in October. Blaming the government for delaying presentation of these laws to Parliament, the writer said that the Ministry of Finance should see to it that the law is ready before October when they will be discussed by the economic summit in Amman which is designed to help Jordan attract investments. The writer said that Jordan cannot face the world in October with the present obsolete laws and the government will have only itself to blame should Parliament fail to endorse the new laws in time.

Commenting on the announcement of the results of the Tawjili examinations, a writer in Al Dustour said that the school graduates and their parents are no doubt facing the question of what to do and what to study at the universities if their grades permit them. Mohammad Soutar said that apart from the financial concerns, the parents and their children will no doubt be at a loss as to what to study in college and to what would best meet the requirements of the local labour market. The writer called on the concerned authorities to try to steer the students towards what is more beneficial for the country and what would help the students find jobs after graduation. He said that the parents ought to refrain from forcing their children to take up university studies if the children do not feel they are inclined to do so and more importantly not to choose courses for which there is no demand in the labour market should they decide to continue their higher studies.

Commenting on the Turkish incursion into northern Iraq, Ma'an Biari, a writer in Al Ra'i, said that the Turkish raids are not only a flagrant violation of Iraq's sovereignty, but they also reflect that the fact the Turkish military has failed so far to crush the Kurdish rebellion. The writer said that the repeated incursions into Iraqi territory cannot stifle the Kurds' voice demanding justice and legitimate rights. The writer said that claims on the part of the Western powers about support for people's human rights are forgotten in the case of Turkey as it represents the Kurdish population seeking basic human rights.

A writer in Al Ra'i said that the Western powers decision to maintain the embargo on Iraq is not justified by any standard as it is causing severe pain to the Iraqis and starving the country's population for no reason. Samir Qitami said that the Iraqi government has cooperated fully with the United Nations, destroyed the mass destruction weapons and showed total commitment to U.N. resolutions.

Yemeni le

(Continued from page 1)

Parliamentary committee...
President Saleh...
The world is witnessing...
Arab World remains...
He said he...
among the Arab lead...
not during his career

TURDAY, JULY 15, 1995
IN PRINT
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Features



One of the houses in Dana before it was renovated



A JEWEL OF THE KINGDOM: The village of Dana (photos by Ranuf Dabbas)

Ending Dana's centuries of oblivion — and none too soon

By Virginia Buchanan

ONE OF the latest fascinations in Jordan is the ancient village of Dana. But that was not so in 1990 when the "Friends of Dana," consisting of Majida Moasher, Maria Shih, Gabai Saifi, Rabiha Ayyoub, Nibaya Saifi, Gulo Sati, Nadia Nabulsi, Nuhad Jame'an, Minna Zawaydeh, Iman Shukri and Dania Sarraf — adopted the village.

Long lost in history, Dana has been sunning itself in various guises through the millenniums, on the jutting edge of one of the most scenic and isolated gorges in the Middle East — Wadi Dana. Because it lies about 60 kilometres north of Petra in the Sharah mountains, off the beaten track and out of sight in rugged country, relatively few people had seen, or heard, of it.

However, Dana's centuries of oblivion were numbered, and none too soon, for it was literally falling apart. The stone houses, built and rebuilt on foundations constructed back through Islamic, Byzantine, Roman, Greek and Edomite eras, had crumbled in or tumbled out with age. Alleys were blocked by piles of stone and debris. Water was cut off. The pristine springs that had given life to this desert oasis, and the channels carrying their water to the hillside fields and terraced gardens, were clogged by dense brambles. Fruit trees were drying up, while water wasted down inclines, ruining other crops by over-soaking. The wildlife and flora of Wadi Dana canyon below were becoming endangered from over-browsing and over-grazing.

Numerous villagers had already moved out, deserting the village that had seemed to desert them, and began creating a new one, Qadisiyah, on the plateau where they could start over.

Aged Dana was breathing its last. In November 1990, during the turmoil leading to the Gulf war, when people in neighbouring countries were in desperate need, Majida Moasher, Maria Shih, and Gabi Saifi first met while working in Amman with various relief organisations to help them. Jordan was reeling from the arrival of masses of refugees, compounded by political and financial cut-offs. The three women, discovering that they had similar ideals and enjoyed working together, felt inspired to do something special, on their own, for Jordan. "Something big, worthwhile and long-lasting — like adopting a whole village."

"Maybe that was being too ambitious," says Majida, "but when you believe in something, it has to happen." When she mentioned their dreams to her uncle, Anis Moasher, he suggested the little-known village of Dana. An avid explorer of Jordan's wilderness, he had first glimpsed Dana in 1952, and years later was instrumental, as president and founder of the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN), in preserving 228 square kilometres of the Wadi Dana area as a nature reserve. Building nature reserves, however, means limiting the local inhabitants' income and preventing their activities. The idea behind the Dana project was not only

to establish and develop the reserve, but to promote conservation, make it popular locally and nationally, and to integrate it with the economic development of local resources to benefit those in and around the reserve — so that each facet complements the other.

Dana, bordering the reserve, was one of the last living intact and unspoiled traditional villages left in Jordan. With its rich heritage and superb scenic value, the village had strong potential for tourism — if it could be rescued while still alive. Dana was the Friends of Dana came in. The village was the people's greatest resource.

"We hesitated," says one, "afraid that would be too much for us, but we at least drove down for a look. And instantly fell in love — as everyone does — not only with the village, but with the whole stunning scenic area around it." Dana's plight affected them deeply. They couldn't sleep that night, knowing that only 2½ hours from Amman people were living without even the basic services of civilisation — no adequate roads, no shelter, no sanitation or nearby water — and scant income. The women felt they should be more responsible to their own people. If they adopted the village and helped build new roofs over head, the villagers would have more incentive to stay in Dana and keep the labyrinth of dwellings a live model of an 18th century Jordanian village. While preserving this jewel of the Kingdom the villagers could become self-sufficient by selling local produce and native handicrafts to sight-seers.

"Yes! we accept the challenge." The women thought of other friends who could work with them. By December, 1990, 11 dedicated members organised, naming themselves the "Friends of Dana." No officers, no letterheads, no salaries, no rent. Monthly dues were donated to the "kitty." What had to be bought or hired would be paid from either the kitty, their own pockets, or fund-raising.

To practise fund-raising, they started with small private functions in their homes, then with growing confidence went on to more public events — a children's Easter egg hunt at a country stable took immense effort (not to mention colouring 310 eggs and baking 20 cakes), but was an exhilarating success. "Since then we must have used every legal way to raise funds," says Gabi, speaking for them all. "We have sponsored concerts, famous singers, fashion shows, Christmas bazaars, dinners and bake sales. We've sold tickets to countless events. We've sold thousands of T-shirts. And thousands of calendars to individuals and in bulk to businesses to use as gifts for special occasions. We think money all the time."

Meanwhile, back at the village, the Friends of Dana had launched phase one: "Restore 20 houses." They made a survey of the 300 remaining villagers to determine the neediest. First was an elderly widow, Tamam, living alone in a dilapidated house. Consulting with architect Ammar Khammash, the Friends of Dana bought paint, plaster and cement, employed a contractor and an engineer to hire and supervise. He

was to hire local villagers only and pay the going wage. He did, and the restoration was on its way. At times the labourers' pay exceeded the actual work accomplished, but it was money well-spent, getting them involved in earning and learning as they worked on their own houses. They had to dismantle some dwellings completely, stone by stone, and rebuild them. They smoothed and plastered walls. They laid new reeds over the old juniper log beams and covered them with repaired roofing. They put in new floors and paved the pathways with stone.

The Friends wanted to raise the people's standard of living, yet keep within local customs, but it didn't always work out as they expected. The villagers used their houses for sleeping and for shelter from the sun, wind, snow and rain. Otherwise they lived outside. Tamam's house lacked windows and she didn't want any, preferring her privacy, as did her neighbours. By phase two: "20 more houses and more fund-raising," the people had changed their minds. They wanted windows, and maybe sky-lights, iron bars, screens and doors. The workers had to go back and redo most of the first 20. Then some of the villagers said, "we have a place for a toilet in our house."

The Friends made another survey. By phase three: "Another 25 houses and lots more fund-raising," the villagers wanted bathrooms. "Dry toilets worked best," explain the Friends, "so we go back to install them in the other houses, too — 'go back' means they are happy with the changes."

Aged Dana was rallying. As the new look spread over the village, so did enthusiasm in every direction. Families were stirred with new hope. The Tafleeh Governorate brought in electricity. The Ministry of Public Works improved the road. The RSCN built a visitor and research centre and launched the Wadi Dana socio-economic project, led by Rebecca Salti, to develop money-making products for the villagers — sun-dried apricots, grapes and figs, silver-leafed jewellery with the Dana stone, pottery in the ancient tradition — and to renovate the terraced gardens. Agricultural expert, Nabeh Al Kayed, from the Queen Noor Al Hussein Foundation, helped organise the farmers and trained them in growing medicinal herbs and organic farming. Villagers were hired to clear the springs and channels of the entrenched brambles and widen the footpaths for the families returning once more to work their orchards and for future tourists.

The orchards and terraced gardens began blooming again. Water reached the village again by a new stone structure with three streams of cool spring water jetting from its massive arched wall. Villagers started requesting a new mosque to replace their caved-in relic, ammar Khammash researched historic mosques while the Friends went back to fund-raising. "It was a headache for funds," Today, Khammash's rustic stone mosque, shaded by old pines and cypress, enjoys the centre of attention, radiating tranquility, in friendly harmony with the architecture and golden hues of the village and matching cliffs.

Now everyone wants to see Dana. Tourists are coming. Amman people who have supported Dana are coming. Magazines are featuring its comeback. Documentary photographers are filming its wild panorama. The Friends of Archaeology brought 80 members to see it on their over-night stay at the camp site across the canyon. Over the coming year nature groups flying in to see the wildlife will visit this Ottoman village where the roosters still crow and the donkeys still bray and the muezzin still sings out his call to prayer without a microphone. Inadvertently the friends of Dana have played a role in the renovation movement that has been sweeping Jordan. The 65 homes, the mosque and other buildings they restored will have a far-reaching impact on the area — Dana is becoming a model for economic and architectural revival. The work of these women in renovating the village has provided a crucial link between the effort to protect Dana's nature while providing a base for the people living next to the Reserve to improve their standard of living through tourism and related activities. Having devoted a large part of their lives to their four-year adventure into the unknown, toiling with the zeal of a one-track mind, these wives and mothers have made unexpected gains in unexpected places. While breaking out of their comfortable urban environment to brave harsh weather, five-hour round

trips, noo-stop discussions with excited villagers, and long absences from family, they have had a crash course in the problem, behaviour and psychology of Jordan's rural people. Their skills in strategy-planning, financing and organising implementation have developed automatically. On the personal level, they cherish the bond of friendship and closeness this experience has nurtured among them. "Many times we felt we bit off more than we could chew," adds Maria. "But we've also shared elation and a rewarding sense of satisfaction. Our families, friends, and the people of Jordan have been wonderful. We couldn't have done it without their support — moral and financial. They came, they gave, they clapped. We want them to feel the reward as we do for what they have achieved."

There is much yet to be done. The Friends have begun transforming another two dwellings into a small centre furnished with modern facilities, kitchenette, guest rooms, terrace and display area for villagers' handicrafts. The road needs to be paved with flagstones. Donors are welcome to fund a terraced courtyard between the mosque and the spring house. Many houses remain to be restored. But, as Majida said, "When you believe in something, it has to happen."

The writer is a travel writer and former sheep herder. She divides her time between her home in Salt Lake City and visiting her daughter in Jordan. She contributed the above article to the Jordan Times.

Yemeni leader ends visit

(Continued from page 1)

Parliament's committee on foreign and parliament affairs, Minister of Social Affairs — and Labour Mohammad Abdullah Batani, Minister of Fisheries Abdul Rahman Bafadal, secretary-general of the presidency, and the Yemeni ambassador to Jordan, Hassan Lawzi. At the press conference, President Saleh noted with irony that Arab countries were moving towards relations with Israel while the Arab World was fragmented over differences. He called for setting aside all "petty" inter-Arab differences and launch a new era in relations among Arab countries.

for solidarity, "which is inevitable," and a desire to overcome the negative consequences of the Gulf crisis. In reply to a question, the King said he was not mediating between Egypt and Sudan, which are feuding after a June 26 attempt on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's life by unknown assailants in Addis Ababa. The King voiced relief that Mr. Mubarak escaped the attack and said he planned to visit Cairo soon to congratulate the president on his escape. "We all suffer from what is known as terrorism," said the King. "We are against terrorism and terrorists, whoever they are, and wherever they are."

President Saleh said he was also not mediating between Cairo and Khartoum, but that he was to discuss the issue with Mr. Mubarak in Egypt on Friday. The issue is of concern to all Arab countries, he added. In reply to a question on Iraq, the King said: "We all are living the suffering of

Serbs launch attack on Zepa

(Continued from page 12)

the brotherly Iraqi people. We hope this suffering will end soon and we are keen to achieve that...these people have suffered enough and they should not suffer anymore." The King also expressed confidence that Iraq would regain the status it had in the Arab World and the international scene and that it would be part of the positive atmosphere for peace in the region. The King also voiced confidence that Yemen would achieve comprehensive progress and the unity of Yemen would be preserved. He also wished Yemen well in its efforts to reconcile with other Arab countries. "We support them (the Yemenis) with our capabilities and energies on the bilateral level and within the framework of our one Arab family..." On Friday, King Hussein held another round of talks with President Saleh at the General Headquarters of the Armed Forces. The Yemeni leader was seen off by the King, Crown Prince Hassan, Sharif Zeid and other top-level officials.

Israel, PLO launch talks

(Continued from page 1)

Dennis Ross, the diplomat in charge of Middle Eastern affairs at the State Department, was asked to join the talks "at the request of both parties, as they try to conclude their negotiations by their own target date of July 25," said State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns. Mr. Burns said the Israeli and Palestinian officials asked him to participate in conversations "about the status of the talks and the central issues of those talks." Mr. Ross met Wednesday with Yasser Arafat in Gaza and Syrian President Hafez Al Assad in Damascus. Mr. Burns said, adding the diplomat had touched base and would meet later with Israeli leaders. Mr. Burns said the July 25 date remained the target date for an accord between the parties, but said that even if that deadline is not met,

Australia to play active role

(Continued from page 1)

the issues discussed were identical. In his comments to reporters, Mr. Evans also touched on the French decision to resume nuclear testing in the South Pacific. Australia is a strong opponent of nuclear testing and has severely criticised the French move. "Obviously, the reaction in the South Pacific area has been very strong to the (French) decision... which we regard as provocative, dangerous and generally indefensible," said the foreign minister. "This was a wrong decision at the wrong time," he said. "We can only hope (that) by a combination of protest and persuasion, we can encourage the French to rethink what was a very bad decision." Mr. Evans' visit was the second by an Australian minister to Jordan this year. Trade Minister Bob McMullan visited in February in what was seen as a major boost to Jordanian-Australian trade relations. According to official Jordanian figures, Australia's exports to Jordan — mostly livestock, meat, rice and

dairy products — amounted to about JD 40 million in 1994 while the Kingdom's exports to Australia — phosphates and fertilizer products — were around JD 7 million. Australia, which has a large agricultural base, could increase its imports from Jordan, officials say. While in Lebanon, Mr. Evans, foreign minister since September 1993, who will be accompanied by Minister of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs Nick Bolkus, will reopen the Australian Embassy in Beirut on Saturday. The mission was closed in 1984 at the height of the Lebanese civil war. "An era of growth and prosperity beckons in the new Lebanon," the two ministers said in a joint statement on June 27. "We applaud the enthusiasm with which the Lebanese people have embraced the process of national reconciliation and are heartened by the reconstruction now occurring. "It is clear that the renowned capabilities and talents of the Lebanese people are once again finding their fullest expression, to the benefit of their country, and, ultimately, to the wider region."

Turnover up, share prices down at AFM

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Turnover rose by 12 per cent and share prices slipped by nearly one per cent last week at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) as investor enthusiasm continued to be restrained by uncertainties regarding prospects for key economic reforms.

Brokers said the market was dampened by the delay in the presentation by the government of draft legislation related to taxation and investments and a new companies law to Parliament.

The draft laws were supposed to have been sent to Parliament last month, but there was no immediate explanation for the delay. The Council of Ministers approved amendments to the sales tax law last week, but it was not known when Parliament would take up the issue.

The weekly AFM report said turnover for the week ending Thursday rose to JD 5.6 million from the previous week's JD 5 million. A bloc sale of Dar Al Dawa shares worth nearly JD 1 million and trading in Arab Bank shares worth JD 850,000 led the list of trading for the week.

Other firms which saw significant action included the Jordan Tobacco and Cigarette Company with a volume of JD 347,000, the Philadelphia Bank with JD 276,000, Arab International Hotels with JD 265,000, Universal Modern Industries with JD 263,000, and the

Jordanian Electrical Power Company with JD 196,000.

The official AFM index based on 60 major companies from among the 120 listed in the market shed 1.4 points, or 0.9 per cent, to close at 155.1 points.

Industrials slipped by 2 points, or 1.5 per cent, to close at 129.67 points, commercial banks and financial institutions by 1.1 points or 0.6 per cent, to close at 179.93 points, insurance firms by 0.1 points, or 0.04 per cent, to close at 135.4 points, and service sector firms remained unchanged at 131.97 points, the AFM report said.

Changing hands during the week were 1.8 million shares under 2,906 contracts.

Trading involved shares of 88 companies. As business closed for the week, 20 of them had gained, 61 had slipped and seven remained unchanged.

Industrials accounted for 52.1 per cent of the turnover with JD 2.92 million, followed by banks with JD 1.87 million (33.4 per cent), service sector companies with JD 760,000 (13.6 per cent) and insurance companies with JD 50,000 (0.9 per cent).

AFM brokers said the relative inaction in the market was largely due to hesitation on the part of many to make major investment decisions.

Institutions also appeared to be apathetic to taking closer action in the last three weeks, and this had a serious effect on individual speculators, said the brokers.

Mercedes signs deal with China

BOHNN (AFP) — Mercedes-Benz signed an agreement in principle on Thursday with the South China Motor Corporation Ltd. (Nanfeng) for the production of big passenger cars and automobile engines in China. The German auto manufacturer announced.

The signing of the 1.4-billion-dollar (one-billion-dollar) deal took place in Bonn during a visit by Chinese President Jiang Zemin.

The agreement, announced in Stuttgart Wednesday, covers the creation of a joint-venture of which Mercedes would hold 45 per cent and Nanfeng 55 per cent.

The venture would produce 60,000 so-called monospace vehicles and 100,000 diesel and petrol (gasoline) engines a year at two factories in southern China. One fifth of the production would be exported, Mercedes said.

Mercedes-Benz spokesman Christian Dau said the agreement in principle would give way later to a cooperation contract.

Under the agreement Mercedes had won "near-exclusivity" for the production of monospace vehicles and motors, the spokesman said, noting that the company had beaten U.S. giants Ford and Chrysler to win the deal.

Saudi-China oil refinery talks snagged

SINGAPORE (R) — China will terminate talks with Saudi Arabia on expanding capacity in Maoming, China's biggest southern oil refinery, if agreements cannot be reached by the end of the year, a refinery official said on Friday.

"If talks cannot reach any agreement by year-end, we will call for future discussions," Fang Guangxin, chief engineer at the Maoming Refinery, told Reuters.

State-owned Saudi Aramco has been holding discussions since May 1994 with Maoming, China's second largest refinery, located in booming Guangdong Province. The latest round of talks was held late last week, Mr. Fang said.

With or without Saudi cooperation, Maoming plans to expand the 8.5 million tonnes-per-year refinery by five million tonnes with addition of a primary distillation unit by June 1997. The project will cost about \$333 million, the company said.

Negotiations reached an impasse earlier this year when the two sides could not agree on the size of the Saudi stake in the new plant and the existing units at Maoming.

"The Saudis said they were afraid of competition from

domestic refineries," Mr. Fang said.

But the Chinese found the fears unfounded and incomprehensible given the large domestic demand in the south, he added.

Standardised ex-refinery prices for refined products would assure Aramco of a profit margin, Mr. Fang said.

"Prices (of refined products) are the same everywhere," he said. "We find it very strange that they have been talking to us and coming here for over a year, yet they don't seem to understand the Chinese oil industry."

Saudi Aramco had wanted at least a 50 per cent stake, but Beijing limits foreign ownership in joint ventures to 49 per cent.

Aramco was also reluctant to assume ownership of various non-oil operations connected with the refinery, which goes against Beijing's policy of not allowing any joint venture to result in a loss of jobs.

China's oil refineries are massive organisations run like self-contained towns with housing, shops and hospitals and provide millions of jobs.

Maoming has an active workforce of 25,000 but supports a population of 80,000 including retirees and dependents.

While Mr. Fang said the latest talks were cordial, he maintained that Saudi participation or support was not pivotal to Maoming's expansion plans.

"We have raised between 70 to 80 per cent of the funds needed for our expansion programme... and the rest can easily be raised either by our headquarters (state refinery Sinopec) or by us," Mr. Fang said. "We are not dependent on the Saudis."

Aramco had suggested setting up a joint venture company with the Maoming refinery to procure crude oil from Saudi Arabia for its operations and to market its products, he said.

"But we don't see any need for it. We are already buying crude for our refinery ourselves and we are marketing the products," Mr. Fang said.

The Maoming refinery set up a marketing arm in Singapore early this year which procures crude and markets refined products.

Mr. Fang did not preclude talks with other companies for other expansion programmes. "We can still talk to other companies in the future if we have expansion programmes later on," he said.

Gulf oil prices expected to fall

DUBAI (R) — Prices for refined oil products in the Gulf spot market are expected to weaken further now that the Indian Oil Corp (IOC) has secured most of its import needs for August through a buying tender, oil traders in the Gulf said.

Supplies in the market from Gulf refineries are more than adequate to meet IOC's needs and that there will be little short-covering this month to lift prices unless refinery maintenance or additional tendering emerges, they added.

The price of gas oil (diesel) has fallen to around a 10 cents a barrel premium to independently-assessed price quotes FOB Mideast, down from a 35 cents premium just two weeks ago. The gas oil quote was notionally assessed at \$19.65 a barrel.

Kerosene prices were assessed by traders at parity to the Mideast quote (\$19.70 a barrel), down from a 15 cents a barrel premium at the start of July.

"The premium is now under threat," a trader in Dubai said.

Gulf traders said that prices for the two fuels could be supported by buying tenders from Sri Lanka and east Africa states but that fresh gas oil supplies out of Iran could undermine any recovery in prices.

Other news in a week when crude oil futures prices touched their lowest level so far this year is as follows:

The Vienna-based OPEC Secretariat said that the group's production rose to 24.68 million barrels per day (bpd) last month, up from 24.71 million bpd in May and above the organisation's supply quota of 24.52 million bpd.

The Kuwait Petroleum Corp (KPC) was the main beneficiary of the IOC tender and will supply India with 135,000 tonnes of kerosene and 270,000 tonnes of diesel in August.

Kerosene has already been sold to Kenya out of the Jubail refinery in Saudi Arabia and the same refinery is likely to supply an August tender issued by Sri Lanka.

Bunker fuel oil prices in the region fell to their lowest level so far this year with 180 st Grade talked at \$86.00 a tonne from \$88.00 at the start of the month and drift of the 1995 high of \$111.00 a tonne.

But Gulf-based brokers noted increased interest from owners of very large crude carriers (VLCCs) for bunker fuel.

Freight rate costs for petroleum products from the Gulf to the Far East were unchanged to slightly weaker. Fuel oil rates to Singapore were assessed at \$5.36 a tonne, from \$6.55 last week. Middle distillates to Singapore and naphtha to Tokyo were unchanged at \$12.96 and \$21.81.

UAE turns to European gas market

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is turning to France and other European countries to market its liquefied natural gas after lower demand in Japan created a surplus to its production.

The Abu Dhabi Gas Liquefaction Company (ADGAS), the UAE's main LNG producer, said it had sold nearly 250,000 tonnes to three European consumers and had finalised deals to sell around one million tonnes for the same firms.

It was the first time that the UAE, a key OPEC oil producer, exports LNG to Europe as the continent gets most of its Arab gas supplies from Algeria.

The Japanese Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) had monopolised LNG purchases from the UAE under a long-term contract signed in 1977. It was extended for 25 years in 1994 after three years of negotiations.

In its weekly bulletin, ADGAS said expansions at its Dab gas liquefaction plant had created a large surplus as TEPCO was unable to buy all the output.

"Because the economic downturn in Japan and the strong yen, TEPCO has been unable to help by taking LNG in excess of the contract," it said.

"ADGAS has more products available than was contracted for. These factors have presented ADGAS with an opportunity to sell LNG in a short-term."

Under the new 25-year contract, TEPCO has agreed to nearly double its imports from ADGAS to 4.9 million tonnes following the completion of a 1.3-billion-dollar project to boost the output capacity of Dab plant. The amounts include around 4.3 million tonnes of LNG and the rest cover Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), according to industry sources in Abu Dhabi.

The project also included building four gas tankers in Japan at a cost of nearly \$600 million. Three of them have been delivered while the remaining one would be received this year.

The sources said ADGAS was also negotiating for the lease of additional tankers to face any increase in demand by the new European clients.

"I don't think this situation will last long as demand in Japan is projected to rise in the near future and Algeria will resume normal export operations in Europe," an industry source said.

ADGAS said the three European companies — Gaz de France, Distrigas of Belgium and the Spanish Enagas — were short of LNG supplies because of a disruption from Algeria due to maintenance of its facilities.

Algeria is the top Arab gas exporter to the West, with a total of around 600,000 equivalent barrels per day in 1993. Nearly 563,000 bpd were supplied to France, Belgium, Spain, Italy and other countries.

According to the Nicosia-based Middle East Economic Survey, Algeria is committed to contracts until the year 2000 to export a total 33.9 billion cubic metres of natural gas per year and 25.8 billion cubic metres of LNG. Most of them would go to Europe.

ADGAS said it had sold around 180,000 tonnes of LNG to Distrigas and Gaz de France and 65,000 tonnes to Enagas in the first quarter of 1995. The new contracts until March next year involve supplying 288,000 tonnes in nine cargoes to Enagas and 717,000 tonnes in five cargoes to the other two companies.

ADGAS expansion project was completed in late 1994 and involved the installation of the biggest production train in the world. The expansion was requested by TEPCO in 1990 to cater for its growing needs.

Experts said the expansion and similar projects by other local companies would sharply boost the UAE's gas export earnings, which stood at around four billion dirhams (\$1.08 billion) in 1994.

The UAE, the first LNG producer in the Gulf, has the fourth biggest gas reserves in the world after those in Russia, Iran and Qatar. They are estimated at around 5.79 trillion cubic metres.

Solidere sales seen at \$150m in 2 months

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon's Solidere company has sold land and buildings in central Beirut worth \$150 million since starting sales two months ago and many more deals are in the pipeline, an industry source said on Thursday.

"Total sales so far are \$150 million," the source said.

"The first sale was in May. There are many, many demands and foreign buyers are in discussions, including international companies," he added.

The \$1.8 billion Solidere company formed last year to rebuild central Beirut has sold nine plots and two buildings since the pressure of demand persuaded it to start immediate sales rather than wait until 1996 as originally planned, the source said.

The area sold totals 30,000 square metres out of 1.8 million square metres Solidere is developing, and the built-up area of the 11 projects will be 150,000 square metres.

The price of the sales was

\$950 per square metre of built-up area, which works out at nearly \$5,000 per square metre of land, the source said. But this could quickly rise.

"Sales now are at \$950 but maybe in one or two months it will be \$1,200," he said.

A Solidere source told Reuters the board decided to start selling in May because of many demands from prospective buyers.

"We were under pressure from people calling us, so we decided to start sales," he said.

"When the company was formed in May 1994 many people sent us dossiers and asked how they could buy. The company waited and waited and then the board decided to start selling because we couldn't keep these people waiting," the Solidere source added.

The plots sold so far are for construction of two five-star hotels, a three-star hotel, a bank headquarters, a construction company headquarters, a newspaper office,

headquarters of the Arab Contractors' Association, a \$70 million commercial centre and a private polytechnic.

Saudi Prince Houssam Ibn Saud recently bought 3,000 square metres for construction of an Intercontinental Forum Hotel expected to cost \$29 million, the industry source said.

Two traditional buildings have also been sold, one for conversion into restaurants and the other for a food company headquarters, he said.

They are among 265 buildings of architectural or social value that are being preserved in the city centre while the rest of the war-damaged buildings are demolished for redevelopment.

A Muslim religious organisation and a Roman Catholic religious order are in discussions to buy land to build schools and hospitals and the Beirut Stock Exchange is discussing buying a building for its trading floor, the industry source added.

Turks, Arab nations study \$590m power grid

ANKARA (R) — Energy ministers and officials from Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq discussed a \$590 million project on Thursday to link their power grids at a conference in southern Turkey, Anatolian News Agency said.

Turkey's Energy Minister Yusef Ataysoy told the meetings the "interconnection

project," launched in 1989, envisaged signing an agreement to enable the transfer of reserve electricity among the member states in 1996.

He was quoted by the agency as saying that a 400-megawatt power link would be completed by 1997 between Turkey and Syria, and another 400-megawatt between Syria and Iraq, the first

phase of the deal.

"Later Syria and Jordan will be connected on a 300-megawatt power link. A 400-megawatt power transfer will be made from Jordan to Egypt and 300-megawatt from Egypt to Jordan," he said.

Jordanian Energy Minister Samih Darwazah told Reuters in Amman before leaving

for the meeting that Jordan's link with Egypt would cost about \$35 million and that with Syria \$75 million.

At a later stage when Turkey and Iraq are linked, the grid between Turkey, Iraq and Syria will have a 750 megawatt power transfer capacity," Mr. Ataysoy said.

Turkey plans to spend

\$35.44 million in 1995 to build power lines from the gigantic Ataturk dam in the southeast to the Syrian border, to be later extended to Damascus in 1997.

A further \$10.97 million spending is planned to build power lines to the Iraqi border to link up Turkish and Iraqi networks by 2002.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, JULY 15, 1995
By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Cooperate with loved ones in getting home conditions improved and all in fine order this morning, then you can get about town this evening.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Get busy at today's routines and buy items you have long been looking for, and then this evening can be delightful at home.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Early today handle any leftover business details this morning, and in the evening you can visit with friends or relatives.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Go ahead with whatever you have in mind today for health and appearance improvement which will turn out well.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Many a personal task can be completed today, so get busy early this morning and make improvements on such, then join with friends later tonight.

VRGO: (August 22 to September 21) This is a fine day for enjoying the company of good friends at social affairs, but this evening must be reserved for the one you love.

LIBRA: (September 22 to October 21) First get busy at the tasks for which you have had little time during the busy week, then pursue personal goals.

SCORPIO: (October 22 to November 21) Formulate some plan early this morning, and then carry through with it and test it on the public tonight.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) This is a good day to handle those difficulties you have found difficult to solve before this and which has hindered your progress.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Take time to come to a fine agreement with your fellow associates early today and tonight show them your appreciation.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) This is a fine morning to organize your tasks so that they become easier to handle. Take any health treatments and exercise needed.

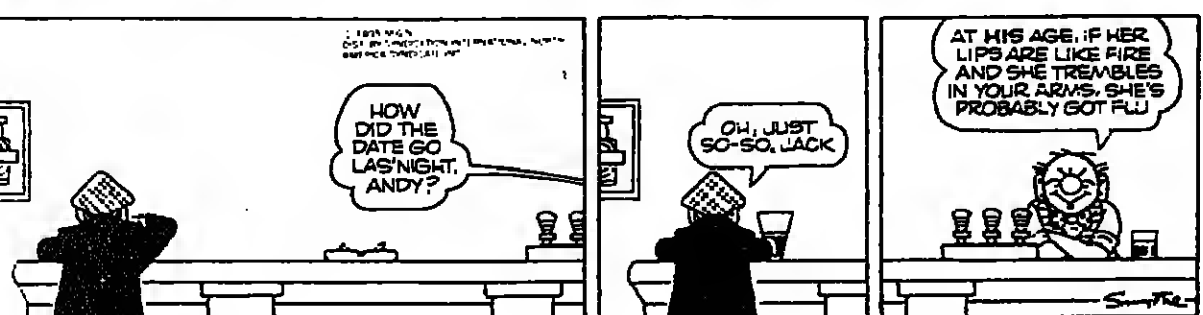
PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) This is a good day for enjoying amusements which most please you. Then you can handle duties requiring your attention this evening.

Birthstone of July: Ruby — Tiger's Eye

Peanuts



Andy Capp



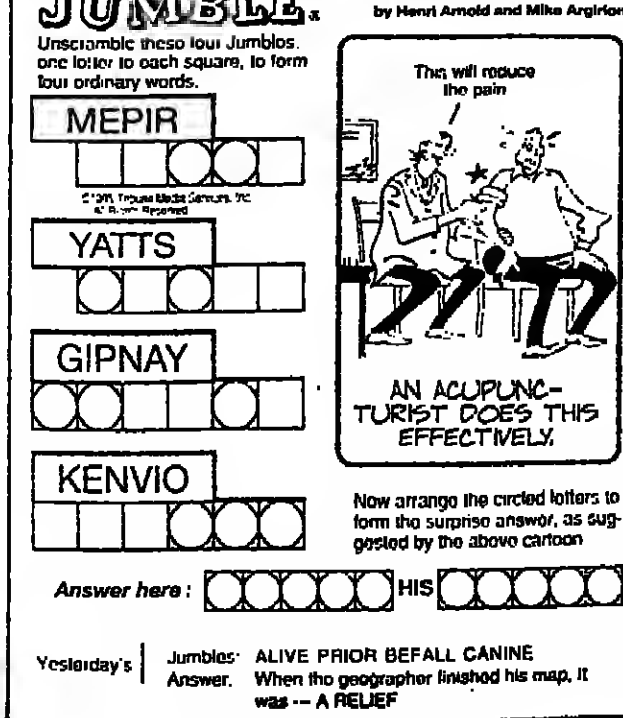
Mutt'n'Jeff



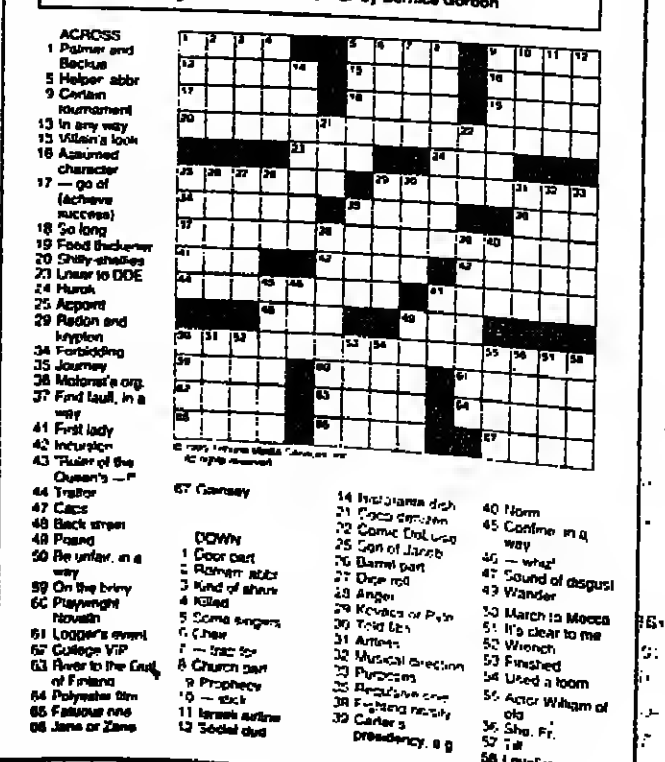
THE BETTER HALF.



JUMBLE



THE Daily Crossword



Business daily beat
A review of economic news from the Arabic press

Factories call for hiking prices of dairy products

Owners and managers of dairies in Jordan called for reconsidering the recent rise in the prices of their products as set by the Ministry of Supply, saying it was insignificant compared to the rise in fresh milk prices. Threatening to stop receiving any quantity of milk from cow breeders if the prices are not hiked once more, the owners and managers of dairy factories called for raising the prices of their products in a manner commensurate with the rises in the prices of fresh milk. At an emergency meeting they held at the Amman Chamber of Industry, they said milk prices rose by 10 per cent while the rise in the prices of dairy products was less than four per cent, accusing the ministry of being unfair to them. The ministry decided to raise milk prices by 20 fils a kilo in view of the rise in animal feed prices. The dairies, which receive 25 tonnes of fresh milk a day from breeders, stand to lose JD 10,000 a year in case the ministry does not meet their demands, they said (Al Dustour).

Jordan will participate in an international exhibition of garden and picnic furniture and equipment to be held in the German city of Cologne in the period August 3-5. More than 1,100 companies representing 50 countries will participate in the exhibition (Al Ra'i).

A new holding company, Al 'Asr Investments Company, was established with a capital of JD 7.2 million. The establishment of the company was announced at a meeting held in Amman in the presence of 23 founders. A report prepared by the founders' committee said procedures to establish the company started four months ago and it was registered with the Ministry of Industry and Trade on June 22, 1995; as a holding company to be able to invest in as many fields as possible. Omar Salah, who was elected chairman of the board of directors at the meeting, said the company will establish various companies along with reputed international establishments. Mr. Salah said the company was currently in touch with an English company affiliated to the American Hanes group to establish an underwear factory expected to start production by the end of the year. He added that there were also contacts with the American Destination company to expand an existing ready to wear factory and market cotton clothes and products in the U.S. (Al Aswaq).

The Jordan and Gulf Bank opened its branch in the West Bank city of Tulkarm in a special ceremony held in the city's main square. The branch is the bank's second in the Palestinian territories (Al Aswaq).

Strike cripples British rail

LONDON (R) — Britain's national Rail network ground to a standstill on Friday when train drivers launched a 24-hour strike over pay.

Only Eurostar trains, the only international service in Britain which runs through the Channel Tunnel to Paris and Brussels, was operating normally. Just a handful of other trains were running in the morning rush hour as most of the 12,000 drivers belonging to the Union Aslef heeded a strike call, dashing hopes by employers that many would turn up for work as normal. Up to 18,000 passenger trains are expected to be cancelled during the day, losing British Rail, which runs the Rail network, up to 10 million pounds (\$15.88 million) in revenue.

Airlines and coach operators put on extra services to cope with expected demand from train commuters trying to find another way to get to work.

Roads into London — where 100,000 people usually travel to work by train — were busier than normal but not chaotic as the morning rush hour began. Some people were expected to take the day off work rather than struggle through heavy traffic on the roads. The capital's underground railway, not operated by British Rail, was working as normal but could be sucked into future one-day strikes that the union has threatened. The strike is the first in a series of six one-day stoppages planned by Aslef after it rejected a three per cent pay offer. Business leaders said they were disappointed and frustrated at the prospect of Rail stoppages this year after suffering heavy losses last year.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET				
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHMEISANI				
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179				
ORGANIZED MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (08/07/1995 - 12/07/1995)				
WEEKLY REPORT				
COMPANY'S NAME	TRADING VOLUME JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	OPENING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB BANK P.C.	859,145	218.500	218.500	216.000
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	191,920	4.570	4.570	4.670
CAYO AMMAN BANK	8,569	4.550	4.550	4.510
BANK OF JORDAN	12,846	1.300	1.300	1.470
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK	7,154	1.330	1.220	1.320
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	13,204	2.570	2.570	2.550
THE HOUSING BANK	101,685	8.100	8.100	8.150
JORDAN KUNAAT BANK	12,990	2.850	2.850	2.840
JORDAN GULF BANK	11,144	1.290	1.290	1.240
ARAB JORDAN INVESTMENT BANK	42,652	3.950	2.950	2.900
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	74,547	3.760	2.760	3.750
UNION BANK FOR SAVING & INVESTMENT	5,322	4.520	4.520	4.400
BUSINESS BANK	6,402	2.900	3.900	3.850
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	71,719	4.250	4.250	4.150
BEIT ISMAIL SAVING & INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	15,267	3.780	3.780	2.770
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	72,585	1.120	1.120	1.100
ARAB BANKING CORPORATION/JORDAN	2,767	5.150	5.250	5.200
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	276,261	1.610	1.610	1.660
BANKS SECTOR		1847510	INDEX NUMBER: 179.71	
		CHANGE: -0.62%		
JERUSALEM INSURANCE	3,612	4.200	4.200	4.200
JORDAN FRENCH INSURANCE	22,462	2.620	2.620	2.670
MOLY LAND INSURANCE	1,485	2.030	2.830	2.970
ARAB LIFE & ACCIDENT INSURANCE	650	2.600	2.600	2.600
JORDAN GULF INSURANCE	608	2.200	2.200	3.040
THE NATIONAL AMIA INSURANCE	6,000	3.100	3.200	2.000
INSURANCE SECTOR		44817	INDEX NUMBER: 125.40	
		CHANGE: -0.03%		
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	196,789	1.710	1.710	1.650
ARAB INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	265,272	5.850	5.850	6.000
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	52,879	2.810	2.810	2.920
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	25,572	2.400	2.400	2.210
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	5,845	1.050	1.050	1.020
JORDAN INTERNATIONAL TRADING CENTER	9,648	1.230	2.230	1.200
MACHINERY EQUIP. RENTING & MAINTENANCE	325	0.670	0.670	0.670
ARAB INTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	69,286	3.200	3.200	3.310
SERVICES SECTOR		625980	INDEX NUMBER: 121.97	
		CHANGE: 0.00%		
JORDAN TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	347,821	26.250	26.250	26.940
ATZARKEP CONST. MATERIAL MANUFACTURING	3,100	1.240	1.240	1.240
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	124,872	7.800	3.800	3.700
JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES	41,046	3.040	3.040	3.050
THE ARAB PHOSPHATE	11,072	5.110	5.110	5.120
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	37,953	10.380	10.380	10.220
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	1,977	3.390	3.390	3.250
THE JORDAN WORSTED MILLS	790	7.950	7.950	7.900
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	49,151	5.000	5.000	5.950
JORDAN CERAMIC INDUSTRIES	13,190	6.000	6.000	5.950
JORDAN DAIRY	1,750	2.400	2.400	2.200
THE JORDAN PAPER MANUFACTURING	4,408	2.620	2.620	2.560
JORDAN PAPER & CARDBOARD FACTORIES		14,873	3.800	3.800
THE PUBLIC MINING		1,751	3.150	3.150
SPINNING & WEAVING		55,514	2.070	2.070
RAFIA INDUSTRIES		10,824	2.490	2.470
DAR AL DANA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT		944,849	7.900	7.950
ARAB INVESTMENT & INTERNATIONAL TRADE		24,200	0.760	0.760
ARAB ALUMINIUM INDUSTRIES		23,020	5.800	5.800
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY		20,659	0.540	0.510
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING		17,306	1.400	1.390
NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRIES		850	2.550	2.450
NATIONAL INDUSTRIES		2,488	1.190	1.190
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES		185,126	2.250	2.260
JORDAN CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES		425	4.250	4.250
JORDAN ROCKWOOL INDUSTRIES		695	1.170	1.120
ALADDIM INDUSTRIES		652	4.500	4.500
JORDAN INDUSTRIES & HATCH/JINCO		256	0.630	0.620
JORDAN SULPHO-CHEMICALS		1,543	1.690	1.620
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS		12,601	2.260	2.260
KAWTER INVESTMENT		1,368	1.500	1.540
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES		263,762	3.210	2.210
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.		56,179	2.170	2.120
JORDAN NEW CABLE COMPANY		46,571	1.940	1.980
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR		2764228	INDEX NUMBER: 129.67	
		CHANGE: -1.51%		
GRAND TOTAL		4902544	INDEX NUMBER: 155.12	
PARALLEL MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (08/07/1995 - 12/07/1995)				
WEEKLY REPORT				
COMPANY'S NAME	TRADING VOLUME JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	OPENING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
CENTRAL GENERAL TRADING & STORAGE	2,848	0.740	0.740	0.710
JORDAN TRADE FACILITIES	19,880	0.820	0.820	0.800
SARFA PRIVATE UNIVERSITY	22,260	1.420	1.420	1.420
UNIFIED CO. FOR ORGANISING LAND TRANS.	10,979	2.470	2.470	2.430
ARAB FIN INV.CO	78,597	1.280	1.280	1.150
ARAB FOOD & MEDICAL APPLIANCES	12,956	1.000	1.000	0.950
NATIONAL CHELORIS INDUSTRIES CO.LTD	1,885	1.890	1.890	1.870
NATIONAL TEXTILE & PLASTICS IND. CO	17,420	1.100	1.100	1.040
RAYTEX DYES & MOULDS	6,682	1.070	1.070	1.040
EL-KAY READY WEAR MANUFACTURING CO.	7,087	2.270	2.270	2.150
INTERNATIONAL TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	16,325	2.500	1.500	1.450
UNIVERSAL METALS	2,800	1.500	1.500	1.380
KID PHARMA	4,582	0.990	0.990	0.970
UNION CHEMICAL & VEGETABLE OIL INDUSTRY	17,926	2.360	2.360	2.090
JORDAN STEEL	205,530	1.030	1.030	1.010
ARAB ELECTRIC INDUSTRIES	3,327	0.900	0.900	0.870
UNION TOBACCO	45,679	1.700	1.700	1.690
RAFI PHARMACEUTICALS	7,934	0.970	0.970	0.960
INDUSTRIES ENGINEERING	6,533	0.930	0.930	0.970
INDUSTRIAL CERAMIC	177,681	1.450	1.450	1.450
I. TEXTILE MANUFACTURER	13,910	1.000	1.000	0.980
PEARL SANITARY PAPER CONVERTING	8,846	0.910	0.910	0.950
GRAND TOTAL		691674		

U.S. Dollar in International Markets		
Currency	New York Close 12/7/95	Tokyo Close 12/7/95
Sterling Pound	1.5915	1.5913
Deutsche Mark	1.4025	1.4049
Swiss Franc	1.1675	1.1719
French Franc	4.8810	4.8905
Japanese Yen	87.35	87.70
European Currency Unit	1.3220	1.3169

Eurocurrency Interest Rates				
Currency	1 MTH	3 MTH	6 MTH	12 MTH
U.S. Dollar	5.61	5.56	5.50	5.43
Sterling Pound	6.37	6.50	6.68	6.93
Deutsche Mark	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.32
Swiss Franc	3.58	3.62	3.75	3.93
French Franc	6.43	6.38	6.10	6.03
Japanese Yen	0.68	0.68	0.62	0.62
European Currency Unit	5.68	5.67	5.50	5.66

Precious Metals				
Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm	Metal	USD/Oz
Gold	389.30	7.50	Silver	5.26
				0.120

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin		
Currency	Buy	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.6970	0.6990
Sterling Pound	1.083	1.1138
Deutsche Mark	0.4961	0.4988
Swiss Franc	0.5964	0.5994
French Franc	0.1428	0.1435
Japanese Yen	0.7959	0.7999
Dutch Guilder	0.4430	0.4452
Swedish Krona	0.0431	0.0433
Italian Lira	0.0431	0.0433
Belgian Franc	0.0431	0.0433

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES		
U.S. \$1.00 costs	1.3592/02	Canadian dollar
	1.3884/94	Deutsche marks
	1.5554/64	Dutch guilders
	1.1614/24	Swiss francs
	28.56/60	Belgian francs
	4.8410/60	French francs
	1606.4/1.4	Italian lire
	87.12/22	Japanese yen
	7.1750/50	Swedish crowns
	6.1730/80	Norwegian crowns
	5.4135/65	Danish crowns
	51.5958/68	
One sterling		
One ounce of gold	338.05/388.35	

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Financial Markets

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Much

ATLANTA (Agent) have been counting. But now, with opening ceremony hours and soon the "We realise their our programmes — and security." Ad (ACOG) president Wednesday will Olympic gathering Europe even as such venues as Olympic centre.

"On the 19th, was bigger than the Ad Yarrowhough said.

A major celebration Stadium while on T Games begin.

At the Internats Switzerland, officials a billion-dollar sports with other peoples.

Payne said 75 per Games and 76 per has been received.

Another \$320 m expenses and fulfil Games. The multi supplier agreements advance service for manpower while a "It's an impossible surrounding success.

Poor sales of some memorial park will with pushes for such Games.

Ticket requests have been expected, bringing money for duplicated refunded, the interest boost the ACOG of pated.

"Our estimate of Payne said. "Responding more orders are deemed acceptable.

Every venue will Games, with most of Sports '95, a collection in test how well this.

While there will system functioning.

Championships and ponships should shape the five-ring circus.

Security's major

Graf

LODON (APF) — Graham is set to appear before the Football Commission, according to a Friday.

The former Arsenal player was handed the ban after being found guilty of a "serious" offence relating to "fixtures" following a disciplinary hearing before the commission.

He has also been ordered to pay part of the costs of the hearing and has 14 days in which to lodge an appeal. No figure has been set for the costs but, with three years and seven other

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♥ J 8 2
♦ 7 4 2
♣ K Q J 5

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♥ 8 7
♦ 9 8 5
♣ 10 7 6 4

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♥ 4
♦ A K 8 3
♣ A 8 8 2

SOUTH

[illegible]

**JORDAN
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Much work to go in year before Olympics

ATLANTA (Agencies) — Planners for the 1996 Olympics have been counting the days until the Atlanta Games. But now, with barely a year remaining before the opening ceremony, the days are beginning to seem like hours and soon they will seem like minutes.

"We realise there will be increasing attention on many of our programmes — transportation, medical, accreditation and security," Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG) president Billy Payne said. "The time has come."

Wednesday will mark one year before the centennial Olympic gathering here, with ceremonies from here to Europe even as construction workers continue erecting such venues as Olympic Stadium and the Olympic aquatic centre.

"On the 19th, we make a major connection. It becomes bigger than the Atlanta Games," ACOG spokesman Dick Yarbrough said.

A major celebration will be conducted at Atlanta Stadium while on Times Square in New York, a countdown clock will begin clicking off the minutes remaining until the Games begin.

At the International Olympic Committee offices in Switzerland, officials will send invitations to 197 nations for a billion-dollar sports and cultural festival being thrown with other peoples' money.

Payne said 75 per cent of construction is complete for the Games and 76 per cent of the event's \$1.58 billion budget has been received.

Another \$320 million must be raised to cover staging expenses and fulfill the organisers' vow of a debt-free Games. The money will come from added sponsor and supplier agreements, a Caribbean television agreement and advance service fees for those in need of space and manpower while at the Games.

"It's an impossibility that these Games will not be a resounding success," said Payne.

Poor sales of souvenir coins and inscribed bricks for a memorial park will not force cuts in projects, Payne said, with pushes for such items continuing through the actual Games.

Ticket requests have been \$125 million more profitable than expected, bringing in \$360 million. While much of the money for duplicated requests to major events must be refunded, the interest accumulating on such funds will boost the ACOG ledgers by higher margins than anticipated.

"Our estimate of ticket requests was very conservative," Payne said. "Response has been very good and we keep getting more orders. I feel people will receive tickets they have deemed acceptable."

Every venue will receive a final run-through before the Games, with most of them coming next month at Atlanta Sports '95, a collection of 12 pre-Olympic events designed to test how well things run during multiple sports events.

While there will be no transportation or communication system functioning, events such as the Pan Pacific Swim Championships and World Freestyle Wrestling Championships should show any weak points in planning before the five-ring circus pulls into town next year.

Security's major task in the coming months will be background checks on every ACOG staffers and volunteers, more than 70,000 people in all. That comes on top of working with law-enforcement agencies and venue directors to finalise plans for safeguarding athletes, fans and officials.

"It's going to be an awesome challenge," said Lou Arcangel, chief of Olympic preparations for the Atlanta Police Department.

Some people living in neighbourhoods near the venues fear they might be targets of terrorism, a fear enhanced by the exploding of a bomb at a federal building in Oklahoma earlier this year.

ACOG security chief Bill Rathbun, who handled security at the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles, said Atlanta provides a more difficult challenge. But 20 years of advancements provided help as well.

"We're in much better position to provide security because of the improvements in technology," he said.

Organisers concerned with VIP no-shows

Faced with the prospect of prime seats going unused before the wily eyes of television cameras and ticketless fans, Olympic organisers are trying to figure out how to handle VIP no-shows.

Ideally, those tickets would be surrendered to the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games, which would then sell them to the general public. Billy Payne, the ACOG president, said doing that is not so simple.

"It's political in nature, obviously," Payne said.

ACOG is required to set aside a certain number of seats at each event for VIPs, including officials of the international federations that govern the various Olympic sports. These seats generally are among the best available and often appear in full view behind the action during televised coverage.

In past Olympics, particularly during early rounds, some officials have found something better to do than attend all the events for which they have seats.

"It appeared to the television cameras as well as the spectators: Look at all those empty seats and therefore wasted seats," Payne said.

ACOG will sell tickets at box offices during the Games and will have the capacity to print tickets on the spot.

While some sponsors have agreed to give unused tickets back to ACOG in time to resell them, Payne said doing that with the sports federations is more difficult because they tend to make their decisions at the last minute.

He said, for example, that officials of the swimming federation may have blocks of tickets to two aquatic events held at the same time.

"They logically would like to reserve the option to make the choice, even at the last minute," Payne said. "It's just difficult. Every time you take away a seat, then you are predetermining some of the decisions that they have had the discretion to make in the past."

Payne told the ACOG board he is studying how to deal with the issue but has not yet come up with a solution.

He said the International Olympic Committee and the federations are concerned about the issue and are willing to do something about it.

Belgium, Netherlands joint hosts of 2000 Euro Championship

GENEVA (AP) — Belgium and the Netherlands were officially confirmed Friday as joint hosts of the 2000 European Championship, the first time two countries will jointly stage the quadrennial soccer event.

The decision was ratified by UEFA's executive committee. Belgium and the Netherlands were the only candidates.

The event will run from June 7 to July 2, with the opening match to be played in Brussels on the site of the former Heysel Stadium and the final in either Rotterdam or Amsterdam.

Heysel Stadium, the site of the notorious riots at the 1985 European Champions Cup final between England's Liverpool and Italy's Juventus, has been torn down. A new stadium tentatively named King Baudouin Stadium will be opened later this year with its first game on Aug. 23 against Germany and Belgium.

"I'm very pleased," said UEFA President Lennart Johansson. "I was the one who proposed to change the regulations some eight years ago. Finally, we see the results. It is a very good concept. The two countries are quite experienced and both have a tradition of football."

"It's the biggest sporting event we've ever had in Holland," said Dutch federation president Jeu Sprengers. "We are two small countries that have a rich history in football. We are very glad we can now show Europe and the world what we are able to do and show how we can manage a tournament in a modern way."

Sprengers said hosting the event jointly will pose certain administrative problems. "We are two countries with different law systems and different fiscal systems," he said. "We have to clear up these problems with our governments, but we have cleared up difficulties up to this moment in a sufficient way for UEFA."

Sprengers said there should be no major logistical problems, with the furthest distance between venues being less than 300 kilometres between Amsterdam and Bruges.

The 1996 European Championship will be staged in England.

Five teams struggle to reach finals

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — As southern Africa prepares to host the Nations' Cup for the first time, five countries from the cinderella football region are poised to play in the finals.

South Africa, hosts of the 16-team showpiece scheduled to kick off on January 13, and Zambia have qualified, and Angola, Malawi and Mozambique should join them.

While Zambia are perennial contenders, finishing runners-up twice, Malawi and Mozambique have made only one appearance each and Angola are attempting to reach the finals for the first time.

In the penultimate round of qualifying matches this weekend, Malawi host Cameroon in Group One, Zambia entertain Mauritius in Group Five and Mozambique and Angola meet in Group Six.

Victory for Malawi in Blantyre on Sunday would bring them level with leaders Zambia on seven points and virtually assure them of a place among the elite after 12-year absence.

Lesotho, who were due to host Zaire, have withdrawn from the competition because they feared the visitors could bring the Ebola virus into the tiny mountain kingdom.

Mechave Stadium in Maputo should be packed for the meeting of Mozambique and Angola, two of the few African countries where basketball rather than soccer is the national sport.

Angola top the standings with 12 points, one more than Mozambique and three ahead of the seeded nations, Guinea and Mali, whose fourth place was the surprise of the 1994 finals.

This clash of Portuguese-speaking nations brings together some of the leading cup scorers, including Fabrice Akwa Mateus, the teenage Angolan sensation who plays for Benfica in Portugal.

Mateus and Antonio 'Paulao' Alves have scored three goals each while Mozambican Nuro Tualibodine has struck four and compatriots Chiquinho Conde and Quana Amaldo three each.

Guinea must end the unbeaten home record of Namibia to keep their chances alive while Mali should boost their goal difference with a convincing victory over whipping boys Botswana.

Goal-shy Tunisia host much-improved Senegal in a Group 2 showdown which will probably decide who joins George Weah-inspired Liberia in South Africa.

Tunisia are coached by Poland's Henri Kasperczak, who guided Ivory Coast to third place last year, but is having less success with a team that has managed just three goals in 540 minutes.

The North Africans suffered a further blow to their morale last weekend, losing a warm-up match 2-0 at French First Division club Olympique Lyon.

Graham has 'no option but to appeal'

LONDON (AFP) — George Graham is set to appeal against the 12-month ban imposed by the Football Association, according to a report Friday.

The former Arsenal manager was banned after being found guilty of misconduct relating to transfer "bungs" following a three-day hearing before three FA commissioners.

He has also been ordered to pay part of the costs of the hearing and has 14 days in which to lodge an appeal.

No figure has been put on the costs but, with three barristers and seven other law-

men involved in the commission, it could exceed six figures.

According to Friday's Daily Mail, an appeal is Graham's most likely next step and he could take the matter to the High Court.

"They are giving me no option but to appeal," he is quoted as saying. "I will sit down with my solicitors in the morning to decide whether that will be to a higher FA board within the 14 days they have allowed or in the High Court for the right to pursue my trade."

Graham's counsel had made a plea for leniency at the hearing and that was taken into account by the FA commission.

But Graham continued: "In reality, because I've been kept out of work for five months already, this is an 18-month ban."

"But the hidden damage in this sentence is financial and it is excessive. How do they expect me to meet their costs if they don't want me to work?"

"Compare this to what has happened to big clubs found guilty of serious financial irregularities and tell me whether this punishment is fair and reasonable."

GORAN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAN HIRSCH

THOUGHTFUL DEFENSE

Both vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH

♠ J 2 3
♥ J 2 3
♦ 7 8 9
♣ K Q J 5

EAST

♠ 10 2 2
♥ A 2 7
♦ A K 3 3
♣ A 2 2

SOUTH

♠ A K 5 4
♥ A Q 10 8 5 3
♦ Q J 10
♣ Void

The bidding: South West North East
1 NT 1 NT Pass
4 ♠ Pass Pass Pass

Opening lead: King of ♠

We venture that few defenders would find the winning defense on this deal. Yet all it requires is counting tricks and deduction.

With only one spade in the dummy suit, almost all prime cards and few intermediates, we like West's decision to double rather than overcall one-no trump. South's jump to four hearts seems reasonable—it was unlikely to find North with little outside the club suit. Even so, four hearts was not easy to defend.

The defenders started with three rounds of diamonds, declarer winning the third. Ace of hearts and another three West on lead and the defender was employed.

It was tempting to try to cash the ace of clubs, but West passed to consider the possibilities. Declarer surely had six hearts for the jump to game, so North's jack of hearts was an entry. Also, since declarer had to have both the ace and king of spades to go to game, a spade return would be fatal—North's jack would win and a fourth spade could be ruffed.

However, declarer had only eight tricks—five trumps, a diamond and two spades—and the defenders already had three books. One trick, therefore, would do declarer little good and West found the safest way to assure declarer would get one trick and no more: West returned a low club. Dummy won, but declarer had no way to prevent West's queen of spades from scoring the setting trick.

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Serbs strike at Zepa as Chirac talks tough

SARAJEVO (Agencies) — Bosnian Serb forces began attacking a second Muslim "safe area" in Bosnia on Friday — directly challenging France's call for world action to salvage a humiliated United Nations in the Balkan crisis.

As the Serbs targeted the U.N.-declared enclave of Zepa, aid officials said thousands of Muslim refugees from the nearby town of Srebrenica were unaccounted for after 30,000 people were herded out of the town by the Bosnian Serb army.

After failing to deter the assault on Srebrenica Tuesday, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) jets roared over Zepa Friday as Bosnian Serb forces blasted U.N. observation posts in the south of the pocket after issuing an ultimatum that U.N. peacekeepers leave and Zepa's defenders lay down their arms.

U.S. General Joulwan told the NATO Council on Friday that positions held by Ukrainian peacekeepers in the eastern Bosnian Muslim enclave of Zepa have almost all fallen, diplomats said.

Airpulses by NATO were requested by the U.N. over Zepa but no airstrikes were conducted, U.N. officials said.

Chris Gunness, a U.N. spokesman in Zagreb said the initial reports suggested that "we are seeing another U.N. safe area being overrun."

Forced out of Srebrenica by Serbs, a huge influx of exhausted, hungry refugees overwhelmed aid workers Friday.

After the Serbs overran the U.N. "safe area" of Srebrenica this week and deported thousands of Muslim refugees, there were mounting concerns that Zepa could be next. The remote mountain town of 16,000 is just 15 kilometres southwest of Srebrenica.

If Serbs take Zepa and the nearby city of Gorazde, they would control all of eastern Bosnia, from the border of Serbia to the besieged capital of Sarajevo.

Aware of that Serb goal, government troops in Gorazde surrounded an Ukrainian peacekeepers' base, demanding back weapons they had stored there.

In Tuzla, the situation was near chaos Friday, as U.N. workers scrambled to provide tents, blankets, water and food for nearly 10,000 Muslim refugees coming from Srebrenica. Thousands more were on the road behind them.

One refugee hanged herself in the despair.

"It's a humanitarian disaster now and it will be our worst humanitarian nightmare if those other enclaves go," said Ron Redmond, a spokesman for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

But those sleeping out in the open at Tuzla — all women, children and the elderly — were more fortunate than the thousands of Muslim men and boys who failed to reach the government-held town. U.N. officials had no information on their fate.

"We are talking about thousands of missing people," said spokesman Kris Janowski. He said as many as 20,000 people may be missing.

France gave its Western allies a 48-hour deadline to join in military action to protect remaining Muslim enclaves in Bosnia from Serb attacks after the fall of Srebrenica.

Paris tried to put steel into the world's response to the capture of the U.N.'s Srebrenica "safe area" saying it would otherwise "draw the consequences."

French President Jacques Chirac, speaking at a Bastille Day news conference, condemned the response of Western allies to his call to arms to reverse the loss of Srebrenica and said it called into question the whole U.N. mission in Bosnia.

"I owe it to truth to say that up to now the contacts the French government has made have not been positive. I deplore that. For the moment we are alone," Mr. Chirac said.

He likened the world's attitude to the loss of Srebrenica to the appeasement of Nazi Germany before World War II and said France stood ready to help reinforce other eastern enclaves and break the siege of the Bosnian capital Sarajevo.

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CROWN PRINCE MEETS EVANS: His Royal Highness Prince Hassan holds talks with Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans (centre) in Amman on Friday in a meeting attended by Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti (see story on page one) (Petra photo)

CBJ governor says criticism of Petra Bank liquidation unjustified

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) Governor Mohammad Nabulsi on Friday described as unfounded and unsubstantiated the allegations made in the Lower House of Parliament against the multi-million dinar liquidation of Petra Bank.

Dr. Nabulsi said the books of accounts of the government-appointed liquidation committee were open for inspection and that every action undertaken by the panel was very much within the mandate given to it by the government and in accordance to decisions taken by the board of governors of the Central Bank.

Petra Bank was once Jordan's second largest commercial bank after the Arab Bank. In July 1989, the Economic Security Committee of the government took over Petra Bank after gross irregularities surfaced and the bank defaulted on its obligations to the Central Bank.

Subsequently, Petra Bank founder and general manager Ahmad Chalabi fled the country, and a government-appointed management committee ran the bank for some months before it found that the immensity of the problems made it impossible for the bank to continue despite more than JD 200 million pumped in by the Central Bank to protect the interests of depositors.

The 220,000 shares were sold at JD 15 each while the prevailing price for the stock at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) at the time was around JD 14.5.

The sale was conducted in public, and the only reason the Central Bank did not approve an open auction sale was concern over the impact of such a deal on the overall price of the shares of the Cairo Amman Bank, he said.

One month after the sale was made in 1991, the market price of Cairo Amman Bank shares at the AFM ranged between JD 14.25 and JD 16.

Dr. Nabulsi said a 25 per cent discount the liquidation committee offered to debtors for prompt payment of the dues was applied uniformly and rejected a charge that the move had favoured the wealthy.

The rebate was offered evenly to thousands of Petra Bank debtors and was not limited to a few, he said. The offer, which resulted in the collection of JD 36 million in

In July 1990, the Economic Security Committee decided to liquidate the bank and mandated the Central Bank to supervise the process. The Central Bank appointed a seven-member liquidation committee and extended its mandate period one year later.

Dr. Nabulsi, the CBJ governor, in an interview with the Jordan Times on Friday, took up point by point the charges made by Deputy Fawaz Al Zoubi (Ramtha) against the liquidation committee.

Dr. Nabulsi said actions taken by the liquidation committee had the approval of the board of governors of the Central Bank and were very much in line with the broad objective of liquidating Petra Bank while collecting the maximum amount possible from debtors.

"The accusations made against the liquidation committee are false, and whoever made the charge did not appear to have bothered to take a close look at the accounts of the committee which are available for inspection," Dr. Nabulsi said.

On a charge that the committee sold shares held by Petra Bank for a price lower than the market price, Dr. Nabulsi said the sale was made through sealed bidding.

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double debts collected in less than three months, still stands, he said.

"All the transactions and deals conducted by the liquidation committee are open for public inspection," he reiterated.

Specifically in response to a charge that the offer had benefited Cairo Amman Bank, the CBJ governor said experts had conducted a thorough study of the situation of the debtor. The offer led to the collection of JD 12 million from Cairo Amman Bank, he said.

Offering an incentive to the debtors helped the realisation of many bad debts which would otherwise had to be written off as bad debts or led to complicated legal wrangles, he said.

"If anything, the incentives help debtors who are unable to settle their dues immediately rather than who have enough funds to pay the debts," Dr. Nabulsi affirmed.

Referring to another charge, the JD 11 million expense of the liquidation committee, the CBJ governor said the amount represented five years of expenses rather than one year as charged.

He said that 42 per cent of the expenses represented the salaries and wages of the liquidation committee, which has been working since July 1990. The committee employs 70 staff.

Another 26 per cent represented litigation charges, he said.

(Continued on page 3)

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(Continued on page 3)

Israel to hand over 50 'infiltrators' to PLO

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israel will release 50 non-Palestinian Arabs jailed for entering the country illegally to the autonomous authority in the Gaza Strip, Police Minister Moshe Shahal said Friday.

"He did not set a date for the handover, agreed during talks with Palestinian Cooperation Minister Nabil Shaath on the estimated 6,500 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

Mr. Shahal said: "There are about 50 prisoners in our jails who entered Israel without permission."

"They have finished their sentences and we presented the possibility that the Palestinians will host them. They agreed."

He did not say which countries the group came from, but most are believed to be Iraqi or Jordanian.

There was, however, no real progress announced on the issue of Palestinian prisoners.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) has demanded that a timetable be established for the release of all of them as part of an agreement under negotiation to extend autonomy across the West Bank.

"We are considering the possibility of releasing prisoners who are supporting the peace process, who didn't commit serious violent acts," Mr. Shahal told reporters.

"Probably the release will be in two installments, one together with the signing of the agreement, the other group will be released probably a short time afterwards."

He refused to talk about numbers.

The minister said Israel

had asked the Palestinians for specific details on some prisoners who are under the age of 18, women and the sick.

"The committee will probably meet in the coming few days with the details, with the names."

Israel also asked the Palestinian National Authority to take charge of Palestinian criminals, not security prisoners, held by the Jewish state.

Mr. Shahal added they were "not to be released but to serve their jail sentences in the Palestinian Authority."

Environment Minister Yossi Sarid, who took part in the talks at a Jerusalem hotel alongside Justice Minister David Libai, said that after the release of the two groups further negotiations would be held for more releases according to the situation.

Dr. Shaath left the meeting without making any comment.

Beirut assaults Israel

Lebanon accused Israel Friday of wrongfully imprisoning and torturing hundreds of its citizens and said the world community consistently turned a deaf ear to its appeals for help.

"There is a kind of weakness from international public opinion on this subject. We consider the world is not doing enough on this till now," Foreign Minister Faris Bouez said.

He told a news conference Israel was holding more than 300 Lebanese prisoners in what he called illegal camps.

"These are not military people. They are civilian people... it is a very clear kidnapping of civilians," Mr. Bouez said.

Yeltsin's hospital stay is extended

MOSCOW (AFP) — Doctors have told Russian President Boris Yeltsin to remain in hospital another week, an aide said Friday in a surprise announcement raising new fears over the seriousness of his heart condition.

"The doctors want the president to continue his treatment in hospital," said presidential spokesman Sergei Medvedev, cited by Interfax news agency.

Another aide, Viktor Ilyushin, cited by ITAR-TASS, said Mr. Yeltsin's scheduled engagements from July 16 to 23 have been cancelled, including a trip to Norway and a meeting with political party leaders.

An aide had earlier this week reported Mr. Yeltsin might leave hospital Monday, July 17, after he was suddenly taken ill Tuesday with an ischaemia, a disease involving insufficient blood flow into an organ and which can bring on a heart attack.

Earlier Friday, a Kremlin spokesman had said he was "doing well" and that his planned visit to Norway on Wednesday and the northern Russian city of Murmansk was still on schedule.

Fears over the 64-year-old president's health were fuelled by the news that his engagements were being cancelled, because up to then the Kremlin had given the impression it was business as usual (see inside).

Mr. Yeltsin's office said he continued to run the country from his bed, sending proposed laws to parliament and fixing Dec. 17 as the date of legislative elections.

When Conoco pulled out, the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) entered into negotiations with several foreign firms, including Royal Dutch Shell and Total.

Although Shell was tipped to win the contract, the company bowed out at the last minute for economic and commercial considerations.

Siri E is estimated to have recoverable reserves of 436 million barrels and the other field, Siri A 50 million barrels.

The two fields are located near Siri C and D, where the NIOC is presently conducting operations and has terminals for storage and evacuation.

Iran, facing a severe financial crisis including a foreign debt of around \$35 billion, hopes to earn some \$12.5 billion from oil and \$750 million from gas extracted from the fields, oil industry sources said.

Big demonstrations and boycotts were staged in the Pacific in particular as French embassies laid on traditional Bastille Day receptions, but

Chirac: Decision to resume tests is final

PARIS (AFP) — President Jacques Chirac, shrugging off worldwide Bastille Day protests over French nuclear tests, said Friday his decision to resume the blasts in the South Pacific was "irrevocable."

As environmentalists marched and protested across the globe, marking French national day ceremonies worldwide, France staged its annual Bastille Day display of military might along the Champs-Elysees with barely an anti-nuclear incident occurring in the capital.

Addressing a nationally televised press conference on his first Bastille Day appearance as president of France, Mr. Chirac said: "The decision to resume the tests is of course irrevocable."

He said scientists were "unanimous" that underground testing on the Mururoa atoll in French Polynesia would cause "strictly no pollution."

Responding to anti-nuclear protests, notably by Australia and New Zealand, Mr. Chirac said: "I can understand the emotion, when there are no ulterior motives, even though I do not share it."

French police laid on extra security to prevent possible disruption here, but there was only a minor protest by a 50-strong group of Trotskyists who were in the crowd watching the traditional parade along one of the world's largest avenues.

Big demonstrations and boycotts were staged in the Pacific in particular as French embassies laid on traditional Bastille Day receptions, but

protests were also to be held in Europe, particularly in Germany and Italy where anti-nuclear test feeling is strongest.

In Paris, Mr. Chirac, presiding over his first Bastille Day since he was elected in May, watched as Foreign Legion troops and marines who have seen service in former Yugoslavia marched down the Champs-Elysees. A total of 175 planes and helicopters, including seven Mirage F1 fighter bombers, overflew the free-lined thoroughfare in central Paris.

About 50 Trotsky